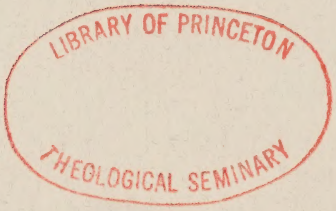

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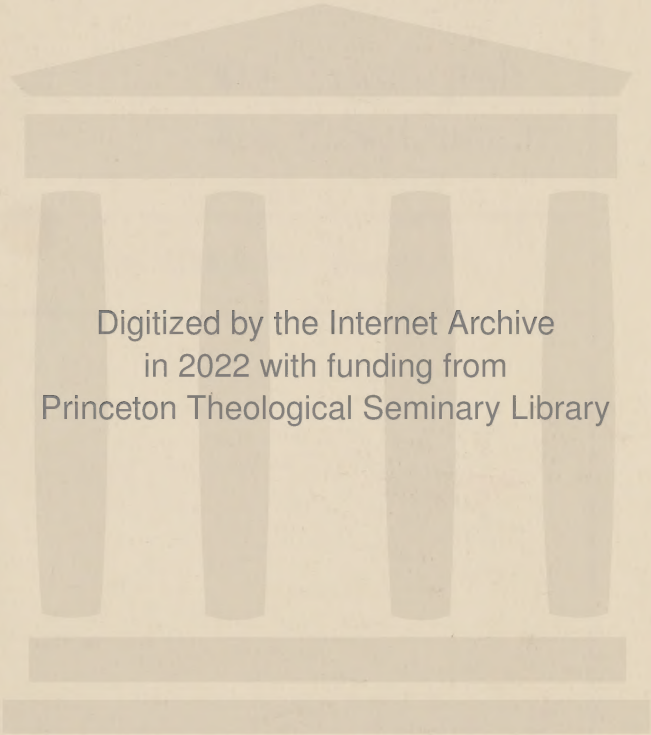
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The Church Covenant Idea

Its Origin and Its Development

By Champlin Burrage

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To

MY FATHER

Henry S. Burrage

WHO SUGGESTED THIS STUDY OF THE

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF

THE CHURCH COVENANT

IDEA

PREFACE

THE material presented in this volume is the result of investigations carried on by the author at intervals during the last five or six years. In its preparation various libraries have been visited and consulted, among which may be mentioned especially the Library of Harvard University, the Congregational House Library, and various other libraries in and about Boston, Mass.; the Library of Yale University (Dexter Collection), New Haven, Conn.; the Lenox Library, New York; the Library of Congress, Washington; the Royal Library, Berlin; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Lambeth Palace Library, Doctor Williams' Library, the Congregational Library, the Angus Library (with the Gould Collection) at Regent's Park College, and the Library of the British Museum, London.

In the preparation of this volume the author has found two books especially helpful, namely, Dr. Henry Martyn Dexter's "The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, as Seen in its Literature," and Prof. Williston Walker's "The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism."

In a work of this kind, that deals with a subject concerning which so little has been written, the author has thought it advisable to quote at length the various writers to whom reference is made, in order that the

reader may weigh the evidence for himself and draw his own conclusions. The author is well aware that on certain points the information that has been gathered is but meagre at best, nevertheless he hopes that the volume as a whole is as exhaustive as at this time might reasonably be expected; but he will be glad to receive any additional data on the subject that may have escaped his notice, and especially the text of any early church covenants of unusual interest.

In the production of this volume the author also owes much to helpful suggestions given him both in America and abroad. Especially would he acknowledge his indebtedness to Prof. Williston Walker, of Yale University, and to Principal George P. Gould, of Regent's Park College, London.

C. B.

London, September 1, 1904

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INTRODUCTION

In general, Northern Baptist churches in this country use a church covenant. It has its place with the Articles of Faith, and our church manuals which include the one, include also the other. What is its origin, and what has been its history? These questions are not easy to answer in full, and it can only be hoped that the following pages may help, in part at least, to solve the problems raised.

For a clue to the origin of the church covenant idea we naturally turn first to the New Testament, for Baptist churches are supposed to be founded on the customs of the apostolic churches. But we look in vain for anything more than a mere suggestion of such a covenant there. The word covenant, however, is a scriptural one, and may be found frequently throughout the Bible, being first used in Gen. 6 : 18. H. Clay Trumbull, D. D., in his two scholarly and widely accepted volumes, "The Blood Covenant" and "The Threshold Covenant," has shown satisfactorily that the covenant idea was widespread among all peoples of the earth, even long before the time of Abraham, and goes back certainly to the day when Abel offered his sacrifice to God, possibly to even an earlier period.

Yet though the church covenant idea, as it is known to us, does not seem definitely to appear in the New Testament, and though the term covenant employed in

relation to a Christian church is evidently of comparatively late date, it is interesting to note that in Asia Minor, very early in the Christian era, namely, during the reign of the Emperor Trajan (A. D. 98–117), there were Christians who seem to have made use of an idea practically equivalent to, though earlier and therefore naturally more informal than, the church covenant idea of later times.[1] This fact is clearly manifested in the well-known letter of Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan (written about the year A. D. 112), in which he says "that they [the Christians of that time in Pliny's domain] bound themselves by an oath at their meetings not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery, or the violation of their word or pledge."[2]

This oath resembles the earliest church covenants of later times, though, of course, the term covenant was not used.

It seems highly probable that other examples of early church oaths are to be found in the remaining literature of the period contained either in the reported confessions of Christians or in the early Christian writings. As to the origin of these church oaths, there is, it would seem, a reasonable explanation. It is a well-known fact that of the two classes of Jewish proselytes the "Proselytes of the Gate" "bound themselves to avoid . . . blasphemy, idolatry, murder, uncleanness, theft, disobedience toward the authorities, and the eating of flesh with its

[1] This important point was suggested to the author by Henry M. King, D. D., pastor of the First Baptist Church, Providence, R. I.

[2] The part of Pliny's letter referring to the point in hand reads in the Latin, "*Seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent*" (*C. Plinii Caecelii Secundi Epistolarum Libri Decem et Panegyricus. Parisiis, 1823. Epistola XCVII.*, pp. 199, 200).

blood."[1] It was evidently a regular requirement imposed by the Jews that these Gentile Proselytes of the Gate should make such an oath. Likewise when the Jews became Christians and formed a Jewish Christian church, as in Jerusalem, they seem to have retained this custom, and to have required of the Gentile Christians in Antioch, as recorded in Acts 15 : 19, 20, and repeated in slightly different phraseology in ver. 29 of the same chapter, "that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood." When Gentile or chiefly Gentile churches later began to be formed it is not surprising to find, therefore, especially in Asia Minor where Jewish influence was very strongly felt, that the church oath is recorded as being a custom within the church of Jesus Christ itself. How widely the use of the church oath spread among the early churches is probably as yet hidden in the records of antiquity still remaining. We know already, however, the origin of the church oath, and the time and conditions of its origin, as given in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

[1] Prof. Albert Henry Newman, "A Manual of Church History." Philadelphia, 1900, Vol. I., p. 58.

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH COVENANT IDEA AMONG THE ANABAPTISTS ON THE CONTINENT

IN the growth of the Christian church the Old Testament covenant idea came into new prominence and received a new application during the period of the Reformation, when Christians who had come out of the Roman Catholic Church not only strongly felt the need of one another's help, but seem to have sought and found comfort in the ancient covenant promises. In the German empire and Switzerland this was apparently the case among the so-called *Wiedertäufer*, or Anabaptists. In fact, the church covenant idea may even have been made use of among the various Christian brotherhoods, of which in the century preceding the Reformation, and even farther back, we find many traces. But the Anabaptists, at any rate, were evidently acquainted with the idea.

In the year 1523, in a book written by Hans Locher, entitled "*Ein tzeitlang geschwigner christlicher Bruder*," occurs the following: "If indeed, we have borne in us the likeness of the Father since the creation and if indeed we have given ourselves over to faith and service and have praised and sworn in baptism, after we received the garment of blamelessness, to work for the Lord's profit, to avoid evil and to do good; therefrom will fol-

low our duty to obey his will with all possible industry."[1] This was written unmistakably by an Anabaptist, as baptism is spoken of so prominently; but this brotherhood evidently had had an existence for some time, at least, before the Reformation began, and apparently had become Anabaptist as the Reformation progressed, for the writer refers to his memory of the long history of his Society (*alten Geschichte seiner Gemeinschaft*).

In the above without doubt are the elements of the church covenant idea, the members of the brotherhood giving themselves over to faith and service, and swearing, or promising, to work for the Lord's profit, to avoid evil, and to do good. Whether such a covenant was employed in this brotherhood before it became Anabaptist in belief, or in others that went through a like experience, is an open question.

The church covenant idea seems to have been of slow and uncertain evolution, and our knowledge of it in these earliest times is but meagre on account of the scarcity of printed records. Yet from 1523 to the present time one comes in history again and again upon this idea, sometimes more, sometimes less, clearly expressed.

The differentiation of Anabaptist churches from all other churches or brotherhoods, one may suppose, however, did not become entirely clear until the spring of 1526, when the then leaders of the Anabaptist movement,

[1] The following is the German text from Dr. Karl Rembert's "*Die 'Wiedertäufer' im Herzogtum Jülich*," Berlin, 1899, p. 105: "Tragen wir doch das Bildnis des Vaters seit der Erschaffung in uns und haben wir uns doch zum Glauben und zur Dienstbarkeit erkannt und haben gelobt und geschworen in der Taufe, nachdem wir das Kleid der Unschuld haben empfangen, dem Herrn seinen Nutzen zu schaffen, abzuweichen dem Bösen und zu wirken das Gute; will daraus folgern unsere Pflicht, mit möglichstem Fleiss seinem Willen nachzukommen."

meeting at the chapter session in Augsburg, agreed that baptism on profession of faith should be the sign of membership in their churches.[1]

The idea of a society of brothers in union or covenant with God comes out quite distinctly in a book containing a letter of the well-known Anabaptist, Michael Satler, printed in 1527. The book is entitled "*Brüderlich ver | eynigung etzlicher kinder Gottes | sieben Artickel betreffend.*" A copy may be found in the Royal Library in Berlin. From the three excerpts from this book, given in full in the notes, it will be seen that the Anabaptists, who met in 1527 at "Schlatten am Randen" (in Austria ?) evidently made use of an informal agreement, at least, between one another and themselves and God, for they were united together in a brotherhood, and had agreed to seven articles. They had further evidently covenanted with God to do his will, and had been admitted into the "body of Christ," or the church of God, by baptism.[2]

It may here be remarked, that an abridged text of the "Seven Articles" above mentioned has been preserved, and was printed in 1883 in Dr. Josef Beck's work, entitled "*Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Oester-*

[1] See Rembert, p. 433, Note 2. It will be noticed, however, that Doctor Rembert speaks of the Anabaptist Church. The Anabaptists formed churches, but not a church in the sense of the Presbyterian Church, or the Methodist Episcopal Church.

[2] The text from which the above statement is taken reads: P. 2: "Lieben brüder und schwestern | wir | die da versamlet seint gwesen im herrn zu Schlatten am Randen miteinander in stücken un artickeln | thun kundt allen liebhabern Gottes | dz wir vereynigt seint worden | so uns betreffen im Herren zu halten | als die gehorsamen Gottes kinder."

Pp. 5, 6: "dz wir nit gemeynschafft mit inen haben | un mit inen lauffen in die gemenge irer greweln | das ist also | Dweil alle (die nit getrette seint in die gehorsame dess glaubens | un die sich nit vereynigt haben mit Got | dz sy seinen willen thun wollen)."

P. 5: "Und alle die von eynem tranck trincken wollen zu einer gedechtnuss dess vergossnen bluts Christi | die sollen vorhin vereinigt sein in eynen leip Christi | dz ist | in dy gemeyn Gottes | uff welche Christus dz haupt ist | nemlich durch den tauff."

reich-Ungarn."[1] It will be noticed that these "Seven Articles" are not merely articles of faith, or exactly a church or brotherhood covenant, but contain elements and characteristics of both. The first article is merely an article of faith on "late" or adult baptism, but all the following articles, except the third, begin, after the number of the article, with the words, "*seint wir vereinigt wordten*" ("we have agreed," or "we have become united," here practically equivalent to "we are united together by agreement, or covenant"). The third article begins, "*In dem brotbrechen seint wir eins worden vnd verainhart*" ("In the breaking of bread [at Communion] we became one and were united"). In these "Seven Articles" then, the characteristics of ordinary articles of faith and of a covenant are inseparably mingled.

The characteristics of a covenant appear most clearly in the fourth section, which may be given, though the text of the whole seven articles is too extended to be inserted here. Article IV. reads :[2]

In the fourth place : We have agreed [have covenanted] concerning separation from evil and wickedness, which the devil has planted in the world, namely that we will not have association with them, and will [not] walk with them in their many abominations. Now also to us is the command of the Lord manifest, in

[1] Pp. 41-44.

[2] The German text reads : "Zum vierden : Seint wir vereignigt worden von der absinderung von dem bösen vnd vom argen, das der teuffl in der welt gepflanzt hat, also das wir nit gemainschafft mit inen haben, vnd mit inen (nit) laufen in die gemenge irer greül.—Nun ist vns auch das gebot des herren offenbar, in welchem er vns haist abgesindert sein, wellen wir seine süne vnd töchter sein ; weiter vermant er vns darumb : von babilon vnd dem Irdischen Egipto aus zu geen, das wir nicht thailhafftig werden irer qual vnd leiden, so der herr über sie füeren wirt. Dis gräuel, welche wir meiden sollen—in den werden vermaint alle babstliche vnd widerbäbstliche werckh vnd gotes dienste, versamlung, kürchgang, [illegible] vnd andere mer dergleichen, die dan die welt für hoch helt ;—von diesem allem sollen wir abgesindert werden, vnd kain tail mit solchem haben, denn es sein eitel gräuel, die vns verhasst machen vor vnserem Christo Jesu, welcher vns entledigt hat von der dienstbarkeit des fleisches" (pp. 42, 43).

which he calls us to be separated [from the world], if we wish to be his sons and daughters ; further he warns us therefore : to flee from Babylon and the land of Egypt, that we share not their torments and sorrows, which the Lord will bring upon them. The abominations, which we shall avoid—by which are meant all papal and anti-papal work and church services, gathering[s], churchway[s], . . and still other of the like, which the world now holds in high esteem ; from all this shall we be separated, and have no part with such, for they are empty abominations, which make us hateful before our Christ Jesus, who has released us from the bondage of the flesh.

These "Seven Articles of Schlatten am Randen, agreed to on February 24, 1527," afford a good illustration of the early use of the covenant idea.

More clearly do the articles of the Brotherhood of Hans Hut, of the date 1527, show that to the early Moravian Anabaptists baptism was the sign of a covenant, or agreement, made with God and the members of the church by one seeking admission to its fellowship. A part of one of these articles reads :

"*Ir Tauf sey ain zaichen ainer verpundtnuss unnd verwilligung gegen got unnd der cristenlichen gemaindt.*" [1] ("Your baptism is a sign of a covenant and surrender of will toward God and the Christian church.")

Dr. Balthasar Hubmeier, one of the most prominent leaders of the Anabaptists, in a work entitled "*Von der briederlichen straff*," Nicolsburg, 1527, has the following passage, which though not containing the word covenant yet clearly manifests in his teaching and practice the use of the church covenant idea :

After that the people heard the word of God, received it, gave

[1] "*Doctor Balthasar Hubmeier und die Anfänge der Weidertaufe in Mähren.*" By Dr. Johann Loserth. Brünn, 1893, p. 209.

themselves to him in faith thenceforth to live according to it, they bound themselves with water baptism to God publicly before the church according to the command of Christ, and promised God that in the strength of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they subjected themselves to him, to work and suffer, in prosperity and adversity, in joy and suffering, in life and death. Yea, as God shall send, they will willingly receive, and with Christ suffer, die, and be buried, in hope and confidence of rising with him, by the glory of the Father, to walk in newness of life, and henceforth not to let sin reign in this mortal body, not to obey its lusts, but to present their members to God the Lord as instruments and servants of righteousness in obedience, that they may be holy and obtain the end, everlasting life, the gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and to his glory, honor, and praise in eternity, chant and sing, holy, holy, holy. That the people may do and accomplish this, they have with public confession of Christian faith and with reception of water baptism been inscribed, marked, and incorporated with the assembly of the universal church, out of which there is no salvation, as there was none out of the ark of Noah.[1]

From the examination of Jakob Kautzen and Wilhelm Reublin, 1529,[2] we obtain further most exceptional and unmistakable evidence of the use of what may be termed a church covenant among the Anabaptists of Strasburg. These men, it will be noticed, in their con-

[1] English translation of the text communicated to the author by Prof. Henry C. Vedder, D. D., of Crozer Theological Seminary.

[2] "*Zur Geschichte der strassburgischen Wiedertäufer in den Jahren 1527 bis 1543, aus den Vergichtbüchern und anderen archivalischen Quellen.*" In der "*Zeitschrift für die histor. Theologie.* 1860. By Timoth. Wilh. Röhrich. P. 44. The German text is: "Zum Ersten bekennen wir frei öffentlich vor Gott und allem Volk, dass wir vor diesen Zeiten, da wir Gott nit achteten, wiewohl er sich nit unbezeugt liess, sammt andern Heiden ein heidnish Leben geführt haben. Aber als uns der barmherzige Gott uss Gnaden, durch sein gesandtes Wort, vom Teufel dess Diener wir waren, zu ihm und von der Finsternuss darin wir sassen, zu seinem wunderbarlichen Licht berufet, waren wir der himmlischen Botschaft nit unglaubig, sondern machten einen Bund mit Gott in unsern Herzen, ihm hinfürter in Heilgkeit alle unsere Tage, durch sin Kraft zu dienen und solch unser Vornehmen den Bundesgenossen zu eröffnen. Haben wir uns auch durch Empfangung des Wassertaufs lassen inlyben (einverleiben) als Glieder in den Lychnam, dessen Christus das Haupt ist."

fession to the magistrates, used just such language as has been employed in the expression of the church covenant in much later times. They said:

For the first point we confess freely and openly before God and all people, that we formerly with other Heathen led a heathen life, when we did not heed God, though He did not leave Himself without witness. But when God in His mercy and grace, through His Word, which He sent, called us from the Devil whose servants we were to himself and from the darkness, in which we sat, into his marvelous light, we were not unmindful of the heavenly message, but made a Covenant (*Bund*) with God in our hearts, all our days by his strength to serve Him henceforth in holiness and to make known this our purpose to the covenant members [confederates.] We have also by receiving water baptism had ourselves embodied as members into the body of which Christ is the head.

Melchior Hofmann,[1] the last great leader of the Anabaptists, also seems not only gladly to have adopted the church covenant idea, but to have brought it into greater prominence in his teaching than any before him. In 1530 appeared his "*Die Ordonnantie Godts.*"[2] In this he expresses the view that "the children of God and

[1] The two best works on Hofmann are that in German, entitled "*Melchior Hofmann, ein Prophet der Wiedertäufer, von Friedrich Otto zur Linden. Haarlem, 1885,*" and that in Dutch, entitled "*Melchior Hofmann door W. I. Leendertz, Predikant bij de Doopsgezinde Gemeente te Veenwouden. Haarlem, De Erven F. Bohn. 1883.*"

[2] This work, says Leendertz, pp. 225, 226, was first "written in the dialect which is spoken in East Friesland and along the coast of the Baltic Sea by the inhabitants of the Dutch provinces known as the 'Eastern' [tongue] (het 'Oostersch'). Original copies of this manifest have not been preserved. We know it alone from a later Dutch translation under the title: Die Ordonnantie Godts, dewelke hij door synen soone Christum Jesum inghestelt ende bevesticht heeft op die waarachtighe discipelen des eeuwigen woort Godes. Door Melchior Hofmann. Ten eerste gedruckt Anno 1530. Ende nu door een liefhebber der gerechtigheyt wt het Oostersche in het Nederduytsche ghetrouwelyck overgeset. Eccles. VI. De wysheit is bitter den onghe-schickten Menschen ende een rockeloos Mensche en blijft niet bij haer. Tot Amsterdam, Claes Gerretsz Boeckvercooper in het Medicijn-Boeck opt Water bij den Koren-marckt oft op die nieuwe Brugghe in die Kas 1611."

brothers of Jesus ought to become his followers."[1] After they have given themselves to the Lord, "they ought to allow themselves to be led out of the world, the realm of Satan, and openly, without reticence or fear of men, let themselves be joined with Christ by means of the 'true covenant-sign,' the water-bath of baptism in order from that time on to be obedient alone to the will of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[2]

Hofmann obtained his view of baptism as the sign of the covenant from Strasburg Anabaptist circles,[3] but although he agrees with them in looking at the relation between God and man as a covenant (*Bund*), yet in this he is original, that he characterizes this union especially as a marriage covenant (*Ehebund*[4]), and states that in the Lord's Supper the Lord offers to his bride a piece of bread as a ring.[5]

As the covenant idea (*Bundesgedanke*) formed the foundation for Hofmann's teaching concerning justification, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, so also is drawn from it the postulate of a strict church discipline, which was resultingly characteristic of the Dutch Anabaptist churches before all others.[6]

If we look back again to the contents of this work [of Hofmann's above mentioned], the most significant and most reasonable that Hofmann had written, especially noticeable will appear to us the characteristic fact that he founded his system on an entirely new thought. It is this, that the whole relation of man to God is consummated in the form of a covenant (*Bund*). On this idea was based the religious organization or communion which he established in Friesland. One might with propriety therefore characterize the same as a covenant church of the last days (*Bundesgemeinde der letzten Tage*).

For, although Hofmann did not discover the covenant idea,

[1] F. O. zur Linden, p. 243. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*, p. 244. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 248. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

but borrowed it, yet we find no other system at the Reformation period which had the same so exclusively for its foundation, and in which that idea was so consequently carried out.[1]

Melchior Hofmann's ambition was to spread his ideas as widely as possible to all lands. His prophetic views were of such influence that they led to the founding of the "New Jerusalem" at Münster. There, we may therefore well believe, the church covenant idea came to be generally known. That this was the fact may be seen from the reprint of an early work entitled "*Geschichte* | *der* | *Wiedertäufer* | *zu* | *Münster in Westphalen.* | *Nebst* | *einer Beschreibung* | *der* | *Hauptstadt dieses Landes.* | *Aus* | *einer lateinischen Handschrift des* | *Hermann von Kerssenbroick* | *übersetzt.* | *Zweite Auflage.* | *1881.*" For though the writer was a Roman Catholic, and not a friend of the Anabaptists, yet he gathered into his book a number of articles of faith, etc., which purported to be, and probably were, written at least in part by the Anabaptists in Münster. For instance, he represents "Rottmann" as bringing before certain assemblies of the citizens, in 1533, Articles of Faith, of which the nineteenth reads:[2]

"Every Christian shall constantly press forward when the Christian course has once been begun, and not look back, in order that the door be not shut to them; that is, when his father, his mother, his sister, or any relation of his, would not accept this teaching [the views of the Anabaptists] and the sign of the covenant."[3]

[1] F. O. zur Linden, p. 252. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 417.

[3] The German text is: "Neunzehnter Artikel. Ein jeder Christ solle den einmahl angefangenen Lauf ununterbrochen fortsetzen, und nicht zurück sehen, damit ihnen die Thüre nicht verschlossen werde; das ist, wenn sein Vater, seine Mutter, seine Schwester, oder sonst einer von seiner Verwandtschaft, diese Lehre und das Zeichen des Bundes nicht annehmen wollte."

In 1534, after "Iohann Bockelsohn von Leiden" had been raised to the dignity of "king over the whole earth," in order that he "might spread the power of his kingdom even farther, at the advice of a prophet he caused the names of all those who belonged to the New Covenant, of both sexes, to be written into a book," says Kerssenbroick, "which I not without cause am keeping, for it was given as a present to me by an honored man." [1] This book, if preserved, would furnish us with probably the first known list of church-members united by covenant, though the conception of the New Jerusalem was highly Jewish and the covenant people of the city were styled Israelites. The idea of the Münsterites seems to have been to found a Separatist city, and later not only a national, but world-embracing church. In this book, to which reference has been made, no formal covenant or promise probably was written, but merely a list of the names of those who by baptism and oral or implicit covenant had been admitted to the Anabaptist churches of the city.

Melchior Hofmann became the head of a great party, known after his name as the Melchiorites, and a characteristic of this party was unquestionably the use of this favorite idea of their leader. To be sure, when Münster fell in 1535, the popularity of Hofmann waned, yet we hear of his followers later fleeing into Holland and England. Surely, then, their ideas must have become known in these countries. What would have been more natural?

[1] The text, p. 568, reads: "Damit aber der König die Gewalt seines Reichs noch besser ausbreitete, so liess er auf Anrathen eines Propheten die Namen aller derjenigen, so zu dem neuen Bund gehöreten, von beiderlei Geschlecht in ein Buch eintragen, welches ich, da es mir von einem ehrlichen Mann ist geschenket worden, nicht ohne Ursache aufhebe."

In Germany, Switzerland, and Austria the Anabaptists gradually became less numerous by reason of persecution, yet for some time after the fall of Münster many probably remained in their native countries. So, also, their ideas survived for some time. Even as late as 1566, from the Acts of the trial of Goddert Schneider, of Bergheim, we know that the Anabaptists continued to make use of the church covenant, though evidently even at this date it was in general exceedingly informal. He was asked forty-three questions, of which the nineteenth[1] was:

> What must one promise on entrance into what you call Christian covenant?
>
> Answer: One does not need to take an oath, but when any one accepts baptism in their [the Anabaptists'] church, one must believe that he will remain a member, and not desert, and if one should also lose his life because of his membership, and even should be taken prisoner for the same cause, one should hold fast and not make known his fellow [or covenant] brothers and sisters.

The Anabaptists, after the fall of Münster in 1535, divided into various parties, out of which finally emerged the Mennonites, who have preserved until the present the best qualities of the early Anabaptists. Whether the Mennonites accepted the church covenant idea at first, it is difficult to determine. It would seem natural that they should, yet Professor Dr. Cramer, of Amsterdam, says that he does not know whence the church covenant idea (*Taufbundesgedanke*) came, and that it

[1] The text from Rembert, p. 509, note 1, reads as follows: "Was man bei der Aufnahme versprechen müsse in, wie sie es nennen, christlichen Bund? . . Antwort: Keinen Eid brauchten sie zu leisten, sondern wenn jemand die tauf in irer gemeindt angenommen, so müssen die globen, daby zu verbleiben und darvon nit abzustehen, und wenn sie auch das leben darüber verlieren sollten, und sovern sie darüber gefangen würden, sollen sie festhalten und ihre mitbroeder und süstern nit melden."

"does not appear in Menno." Doctor Cramer is, however, evidently thinking of a set church covenant formula, or more probably of articles of faith, for he continues: "Such a formula as you mean does not appear in the sixteenth century. At the beginning of the seventeenth century people began to demand answers to questions which agreed," but "one may not speak of a generally accepted formula." "With a part of the Mennonites called the '*Alte Flämengen*,' the church covenant idea was, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, very prominent."[1]

Yet in this letter, as already has been suggested, Professor Cramer seems to have in mind articles of faith, not a church covenant such as we now have, and, therefore, with no direct evidence at hand on this point, we can say merely that it seems probable that the early Mennonites were acquainted at least with an idea so characteristic of the Anabaptists.

From the "Racovian Catechism," composed about 1590 by the Polish anti-trinitarian Anti-Pedobaptists, and first issued in 1605, it would seem that the covenant idea early met with approval in Poland, though the term "covenant" may not have been employed. This fact is indicated in the "Racovian" definition of baptism, which is said to be:

> A rite of initiation whereby men, after admitting his doctrine and embracing faith in him, are bound to Christ and planted among his disciples or in his church; renouncing the world, with its manners and errors, and professing that they have for their sole leader and master in religion, and in the whole of their lives and conversation the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who

[1] In a letter to the author.

spoke by the apostles; declaring and, as it were, representing by their very ablution, immersion and emersion, that they design to rid themselves of the pollution of their sins, to bury themselves with Christ, and therefore to die with him and rise again to newness of life; binding themselves down in order than [that] they may do this in reality; and at the same time, after making this profession and laying themselves under this obligation, receiving the symbol and the sign of the remission of their sins, and so far receiving the remission itself. [1]

[1] Prof. Albert Henry Newman, "A History of Anti-Pedobaptism." Philadelphia, 1897, p. 338.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH COVENANT IDEA AMONG THE SCOTCH REFORMERS

WHETHER direct influence from the Anabaptists was felt at this early period in Scotland is uncertain. To be sure they came over into England, but direct evidence that they ever went as far north as Scotland, or ever spread abroad their literature there, is not easy to find. The view of the Anabaptists, however, that infants should not be baptized must have been known in Scotland at an early period of the Reformation, for from 1530 various confessions[1] had been published on the continent and sent into foreign lands to give warning against this pernicious sect, as it was then regarded. Possibly, prompted simply by these warnings, and wishing to show their sympathy with other State churches, or possibly because Anabaptists were actually in the country and therefore to be feared, the Scotch reformers in 1561 published a Confession of Faith, prepared in the preceding year, which refers to the Anabaptists as follows:

VVe confesse and acknowledge that baptisme apperteaneth as well to the infants of the faithfull as vnto them that be of age and discrecion.

And so we dampne the error of the anabaptistes

[1] See Dr. Philip Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom." New York, 1877, Vol. III., pp. 13, 17, 18, 173, 291, 306.

who deneyeth baptisme to apperteaine to children, before that they haue faith and vnderstanding.

Is it, then, unreasonable also to suppose that other of their ideas had by this time become known? At any rate it is interesting to note that the covenant idea was quite as prominent among the early Scotch reformers as among the Anabaptists, and that words apparently from the same root, sometimes at least, were employed by them to indicate the word "covenant." The Anabaptist expression was *Bund*, the Scotch, Band or Bond. Was this a mere coincidence or not? Or might the covenant idea have come into Scotland from quite another source, namely, through Calvinism? The problem of the origin of the Scotch covenant idea may be unsolvable, but the fact remains of the frequent use of so-called covenants, and of the forming of parties called Covenanters, so numerous and powerful as to determine the church polity of the Scotch nation.

In speaking of the early covenants, James Kerr, D. D., says[1] that the people of Scotland "were led to bind themselves together in 'bands,' or covenants, and together to God, in prosecution of their aims. At Dun, in 1556, they entered into a 'Band' in which they vowed to 'refuse all society with idolatry.' At Edinburgh, in 1557, they entered into 'ane Godlie Band,' vowing that 'we, by his grace, shall, with all diligence, continually apply our whole power, substance, and our lives to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed word of God.' At Perth, in 1559, they entered into covenant 'to put away all things that dishonor his

[1] In "The Covenants and the Covenanters." Edinburgh, 1895, pp. 12, 13.

name that God may be truly and purely worshiped.' At Edinburgh, in 1560, they entered into covenant 'to procure, by all means possible, that the truth of God's word may have free passage within this realm.' And these covenants were soon followed by the Confession of Faith prepared by Knox and five other reformers, and acknowledged by the three Estates as 'wholesome and sound doctrine grounded upon the infallible truth of God.' "

Fortunately the text of all the important Scotch Covenants has been preserved. The one signed in the winter of 1557 by the early reformers, known as the First Covenant, reads as follows :

We, perceiving how Satan, in his members, the Antichrists of our time, cruelly doth rage, seeking to overthrow and to destroy the evangel of Christ and His Congregation, ought, according to our bounden duty, to strive in our Master's cause even unto the death, being certain of the victory in Him. The which our duty being well considered, we do promise, before the majesty of God and His Congregation, that we (by his grace) shall with all diligence continually apply our whole power, substance, and our very lives, to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God and His Congregation; and shall labour at our possibility to have faithful ministers purely and truly to minister Christ's evangel and sacraments to His people. We shall maintain them, nourish them, and defend them, the whole Congregation of Christ, and every member thereof, at our whole powers and wearing of our lives, against Satan, and all wicked power that does intend tyranny or trouble against the foresaid Congregation. Unto the which Holy Word and Congregation we do join us, and also do forsake and renounce the congregation of Satan, with all the superstitious abomination and idolatry thereof; and, moreover, shall declare ourselves manifestly enemies thereto, by this our faithful promise before God, testified to His Congregation,

by our subscriptions at these presents. At Edinburgh, the 3d day of December 1557 years.[1]

"A great advance was reached," says Doctor Kerr, "by the National Covenant of 1580. This National Covenant, or Second Confession of Faith was prepared by John Craig. . . Its original title was 'Ane Short and Generall Confession of the True Christiane Faith and Religione, according to God's verde and Actis of our Perlamentis, subscryved by the Kingis Majestie and his Household, with sindrie otheris, to the glorie of God and good example of all men, att Edinburghe, the 28 day of Januare, 1580, and 14 yeare of his Majestie's reigne.[2]

This covenant was subscribed again in 1590 and 1596, and was renewed February 28, 1638, and "was transcribed into hundreds of copies, carried throughout the country from north to south and east to west, and subscribed everywhere."[3] The National Covenant, as finally renewed, is a long document, containing two additions to the original covenant, one summarizing the Acts of Parliament, the other consisting of special religious articles for the time. The following quotations[4] will furnish some idea of the nature of this covenant:

We all and every one of us under-written, protest, That, after long and due examination of our own consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the Spirit and Word of God: and therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm, before God and the whole world, that

[1] Text from "The History of Scotland." By John Mill Burton. Edinburgh and London, 1867, p. 58. On p. 57 Mr. Burton says: "In the winter of 1557 they [the Scotch Reformers] adopted a plan which we have seen in practice in Scotland from a very early day. Many of them signed a band or bond to co-operate with each other for the purposes set forth in the document. This was termed the First Covenant."

[2] "The Covenants and the Covenanters." By James Kerr, D. D., Edinburgh, 1895, p. 13.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 18. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 39–51.

this only is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God, and bringing salvation to man, which now is, by the mercy of God, revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel; and is received, believed, and defended by many and sundry notable kirks and realms, but chiefly by the Kirk of Scotland, the King's Majesty, and three estates of this realm, as God's eternal truth, and only ground of our salvation. . .

We Noblemen, Barons, Gentlemen, Burgesses, Ministers and Commons under-written, . . do hereby profess, and before God, His angels, and the world, solemnly declare, That with our whole hearts we agree, and resolve all the days of our life constantly to adhere unto and to defend the aforesaid true religion, and (forbearing the practice of all novations . . .) to labour, by all means, to recover the purity and liberty of the Gospel, as it was established and professed before the foresaid novations. . . And therefore, from the knowledge and conscience of our duty to God, to our King and country, without any worldly respect or inducement, so far as human infirmity will suffer, wishing a further measure of the grace of God for this effect; we promise and swear, by the GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD, to continue in the profession and obedience of the aforesaid religion. . .

And because we cannot look for a blessing from God upon our proceedings, except with our profession and subscription we join such a life and conversation as beseemeth Christians who have renewed their covenant with God; we therefore faithfully promise for ourselves, our followers, and all others under us, both in public, and in our particular families, and personal carriage, to endeavour to keep ourselves within the bounds of Christian liberty, and to be good examples to others of all godliness, soberness, and righteousness, and of every duty we owe to God and man.

And, that this our union and conjunction may be observed without violation, we call the LIVING GOD, THE SEARCHER OF OUR HEARTS, to witness, who knoweth this

to be our sincere desire and unfeigned resolution, as we shall answer to JESUS CHRIST in the great day, and under pain of God's everlasting wrath, and of infamy and loss of all honour and respect in this world: most humbly beseeching the LORD to strengthen us by his HOLY SPIRIT for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with a happy success; that religion and righteousness may flourish in the land, to the glory of God, the honour of our King, and peace and comfort of us all. In witness whereof, we have subscribed with our hands all the premises.

The last and most important covenant made in Scotland is that called the "Solemn League and Covenant" of 1643. One of the original copies[1] of this is in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum. It is written on a roll of parchment several feet long, and about eight inches wide. In this document there are six articles, and a seventh, or conclusion, introduced by "And." Below the articles are two long parallel rows of names and marks signed by Covenanters.

The roll begins:

A Solemn League and Couenant for reformation and defence of religion the honour and happinesse of the Kinge and the peace and safety of the three Kingdomes of England Scotland and Ireland wherein wee all subscribe and each one of vs for himselfe wth our hands lifted vpp to the most high God, doe swear. . .

1. First that wee . . .

The long closing section is as follows:

And because theis Kingdomes are guilty of many sinnes and proucacõns against God and his sonne Jesus

[1] The Press mark is ADDL. MS. 9373, 288B.

Christ, as is too manifest by our p^re^sent distresses and dangers the fruts thereof wee professe and declare before God and the world our vnfained desire to bee humbled for our owne sines and for the sines of theis Kingdomes, especially that we haue not as wee ought, valued the inestimable Benefitt of the Gospel that wee haue not labored for the purity and power thereof and that wee have not endeauoured to receiue Christ in our harts nor to walk worthy of him in our liues w^ch^ are the causes of other sines and transgessions soe much aboundinge amongst vs : And our true and vnfained purpose, desire, and endeauor for our selues, and all other vnder our power and charge both in publike and in priuate in all duties wee owe to God and man to amend our Liues and each one to goe before another in the example of A reall reformacõn that the Lord may turne away his wrath & heauie indignacõn & establish these Churches and Kingdomes in truth and peace. And this couenant wee make in the p^re^sence of Almyghty God the searcher of all harts w^th^ a true intencõn to reforme the same, as wee shall answer at the great day when the secrets of all harts shall be disclosed most humbly besseechinge the Lord to strengthen vs w^th^ his holy Spirit for this end, & to blesse our desires & proceedings w^th^ such successe as may be deliu^er^ance and safety to his people & encouragment to other christian Churches groaninge vnder, or in danger of the yoke of Antichristian tyranny to Joyne in the same, or like assocãcõn and couenant to the glory of God the enlargment of the Kingdome of Jesus Christ and the peace and tranquilitie of Christian Kingdomes and common wealth.

[Dated Mar : 3, 1643.]

These are the chief Scottish covenants. To the Scotch people they are, indeed, of inestimable significance, for they are, one may say, practically the foundation on which modern Scotland rests, and they have given it in

large measure those hardy characteristics which have distinguished it from all other countries, even to this day. These were not church covenants in the narrower sense in which the term came to be used in England, Holland, and America, but the earliest were signed by the inhabitants of cities and districts, then later by the people of the nation, the Solemn League and Covenant being accepted also even by Parliament. On these later covenants the Scottish National Presbyterian Church is based.

In the history of the development of the church covenant idea the Scotch covenants are important, as indicating how early the idea of written covenant documents to be signed was manifested, and how rapidly it grew and expanded. The Scotch custom marks a great advance in the evolution of the covenant when compared with the informal practice of the Anabaptists on the Continent.

Besides the fact that these covenants were somewhat extended written documents to be signed, the following points should be especially noted in the examination of them:

First, a promise of men before God, his congregation, angels, and the world, to devote their lives to the upbuilding of the church.

Secondly, a promise to renounce the congregation of Satan.

Thirdly, the wish, stated in that of 1643, of "encouragment to other Christian churches groaninge vnder, or in danger of the yoke of Antichristian tyranny to Joyne in the same, or like assocācōn and couenant."

Fourthly, a covenant may be renewed.

CHAPTER III

ROBERT BROWNE AND HIS VIEWS CONCERNING THE CHURCH COVENANT

THE next stage in the development of the church covenant idea is connected with the Brownist movement in England and Holland. First, it is necessary, therefore, to give some account of Robert Browne,[1] from whom the Brownists derived their name, also to consider his views on the church covenant.

Though a thinker of considerable ability, Robert Browne[2] was a man to be admired neither for stability

[1] For a more extended account of Robert Browne's life see Prof. Williston Walker's "History of the Congregational Churches in the United States." New York. 1894.

[2] In the summer of 1901, the writer found in the British Museum a volume largely composed of letters in manuscript. One of these was signed "Your Worships humble to commaund. Robert Browne | written this last of December : 1588." It consisted of twelve folio pages, the text of the letter covering nine of them. It was in the main beautifully and compactly written in an uncommonly legible hand for that period, and on the back of the last leaf, in the rather scrawly writing of another but contemporary hand, were the words : "Mr Brownes aunswer to Mr Flowers letter ; for his iugdement in diverse particular pointes in this letter you may not accompte of it : for he hath reformed them & hym selfe likwise. The wordes to be looked vppe I haue rase [underlined] wth my pen." The writer at once noticed the excellent preservation of this letter, the clean, untorn pages, the regular writing, unmistakably like the facsimile of Robert Browne's signature to be seen in Dr. Henry Martyn Dexter's "The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years," and further the interesting character of some of the material in the letter.

About a year later, on the writer's return to England, the volume again came under his notice. Once more he became interested in this manuscript and desiring to gain a greater familiarity with the peculiar handwriting of that period, he determined to begin to decipher this document, and if it proved valuable, to read it through, and to make at the same time a legible transcript. He commenced the task at once. Several days passed ; a good part of the manuscript had been transcribed, when one evening he happened to think it might be worth while to see if Dr. Dexter knew of the existence of this particular letter. He had not read far in that learned specialist's

of character nor for wisdom of conduct. He could not be called a great leader, for he was rash and impulsive. It was probably in 1579, while pastor of a church in Cambridge, that he became a Separatist. At any rate, about 1580 he left Cambridge for Norwich, where, in company with a university acquaintance, Richard Harrison,[1] he perfected his theories of church polity and soon formed a church. This was also the same year that the Scotch were signing their National Covenant for the first time. Robert Browne did not long remain at Norwich, but on account of the opposition of the Bishop of Norwich and of Richard Bancroft, afterward Archbishop of Canterbury, with the greater part of his church, emigrated to Middelburg, Zealand.[2] It has been said that Browne went to Holland in order to become better known,[3] but whether this be true or not, he did probably come into closer connection with Anabaptist thought, which may have given him added sug-

great work when he came to the passages cited by him from Richard Bancroft's sermon. As he looked over the letter it seemed to the writer that he was reading strangely familiar words, and he realized with a start of surprise that he had been deciphering the original of this very lost treatise, and glancing over the text of the letter more closely he saw that the underlined passage quoted included both of the citations in Bancroft's sermon. Then he read these words in the scrawly hand on the back of the last leaf of the letter: "The word*es* to be looked vppe I have rase [underlined] wth my pen," and then with sudden intuition he saw that Bancroft had quoted from this very letter, and that it had never been printed, so that it was no wonder Dr. Dexter did not even know the title of this lost Treatise, for it never had a title.

The writer made known his discovery to the Congregational Historical Society, London, and Browne's letter, under the title, "A New Year's Guift, an Hitherto Lost Treatise by Robert Browne," was published by the Society at the close of 1903. For a list of Browne's writings, see this publication, pp. 6, 7; also for the writer's view of the historical value of this newly discovered writing by Browne, see pp. 15–18.

[1] Doctor Dexter may have been mistaken in regard to Harrison's first name. Professor Arber and the British Museum catalogue call him Richard Harrison. He is known as Richard Harrison to the majority of early writers whose works the author has seen.

[2] See "A New Year's Guift, an Hitherto Lost Treatise by Robert Browne," p. 17.

[3] See Dr. H. M. Dexter's "Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years." New York, 1880, p. 73.

gestions for his work, printed in 1582, entitled "A Booke | WHICH SHEWETH," etc., the most important of his writings.

In 1583 Robert Browne went over to Scotland with several followers, as he felt justly conscious that his pastorate in Middelburg had been by no means a success.[1] But he met only with opposition, and in 1584 he returned to England and was there imprisoned. After his release he was excommunicated by the Bishop of Peterborough in 1586, but later in the same year he was made head of a grammar school in Southwark, having agreed to submit to the authority of the English Church. In 1591 he was made rector of the village of Achurch-cum-Thorpe, where he lived during most of the remaining forty years of his life. He died between 1631 and 1633 in Northampton jail, in which he had been confined for resisting the collection of a debt.

So much concerning the outward facts of his life. We may now turn to his epoch-making work, "A Booke | WHICH SHEWETH THE | *life and manners of all true Christians*, | and howe vnlike they are vnto Turkes and Papistes | and Heathen folke. | By me, ROBERT BROWNE, | Middelbvrgh, | ¶ Imprinted by Richarde Painter. | 1582."

There are about ten short sections of this work, which it is essential for us here to examine. They are the following :

1. Wherefore are we called the people of God and Christians? Because that by a willing Couenaunt made

[1] Browne's troubles in his church at Middelburg are fully described in a "Trve and Short Declaration, both of the Gathering and Ioyning together of certaine Persons ; and also of the Lamentable Breach and Division which fell amongst Them." Lambeth Palace Library, London. (Press mark, 4o. 2. 23.)

with our God, we are vnder the gouernement of God and Christe, and thereby do leade a godly and christian life.

[Definition on section 1.] Christians are a companie or number of beleeuers, which by a willing couenaunt made with their God, are vnder the gouernement of God and Christ, and keepe his Lawes in one holie communion: Because they are redeemed by Christe vnto holines & happines for euer, from whiche they were fallen by the sinne of Adam.

36. Howe must the churche be first planted and gathered vnder one kinde of gouernement?

First by a couenant and condicion, made on Gods behalfe.

Secondlie by a couenant and condicion made on our behalfe.

Thirdlie by vsing the sacrament of Baptisme to seale those condicions, and couenantes.

[Definition on section 36.] The couenant on God's behalf is his agreement or partaking of condicions with vs that if we keepe his lawes, not forsaking his gouernment, hee will take vs for his people, & blesse vs accordingly.

37. What is the couenant, or condicion on Gods behalfe? His promise to be our God and sauiour, if we forsake not his gouernement by disobedience.

Also his promise to be the God of our seede, while we are his people. Also the gifte of his spirit to his children as an inwarde calling and furtheraunce of godlines.

[Definition on section 37.] His promise to his church, is his sure couenant, remembred, taught, and held by the church, and the seede thereof: whereby it onely hath assurance of saluation in Christ.

38. What is the couenant or condicion on our behalfe?

We must offer and geue vp our selues to be of the church and people of God.

We must likewise offer and geue vp our children and others, being vnder age, if they be of our households and we haue full power ouer them. We must make

profession, that we are his people, by submitting our selues to his lawes and gouernement.

[Definition on section 38.] The couenaunt on our behalfe, is our agreement and partaking of conditions with God, That he shal be our God so long as wee keepe vnder his gouernement, and obey his lawes, and no longer.

39. How must Baptisme be vsed as a seale of this couenaunt?

They must be duelie presented, and offered to God and the church, which are to be Baptised.

They must be duelie received vnto grace and fellowship.

[Definition on section 39.] Baptisme is a Sacrament or marke of the outwarde church, sealing vnto vs by the washing of our bodies in water, and the word accordingly preached, our suffering with Christ to die vnto sinne by repentance, and our rising with him to liue vnto righteousnes, and also sealing our calling, profession, and happines gotten by our faith in our victorie of the same Iesus Christ.

[Definition on section 43.] Baptising into the bodie and gouernement of Christ, is when the parties Baptised are receyued vnto grace and fellowshippe, by partaking with the church in one Christian communion.

The above are all the sections of the book which especially concern us, except the definition on section 35, which is merely a restatement of the definition on section 1, quoted above.

What, then, is the sum of the contents of these passages?

1. What is termed a "covenant" may properly be used in organizing Christian churches.

2. This "covenant" is called a "willing covenant," as distinguished from a compulsory covenant. (The word church covenant is not employed.)

3. This covenant is made with God.

4. There are two aspects to a covenant by which a

church may be organized, (1) the agreement on God's part to be the God of the people covenanting, if they keep his laws; (2) the united agreement of the people desiring to form a church to give up themselves and their children to be the church and people of God.

5. The sacrament of baptism, as the seal of the covenant, is to be administered to all those who desire to form any particular church.

We may now properly ask, whether Robert Browne is entirely or partly original in this work, or whether the ideas here expressed are in general borrowed from others who had preceded him, but more clearly thought out than hitherto had been the case.

With the facts already presented concerning the German Anabaptists and the Scottish Covenanters, it would be difficult to believe that Browne's views on the church covenant, at least, were absolutely original. But before answering the question more fully, it will be advisable to consider for a moment the contents of a book which Robert Browne, with his tendencies of mind, may naturally have read.

It is entitled "The Hvmbel | and vnfamed confessiõ | of the belefe of certain poore banished | men, grounded vpon the holy Scrip- | tures of God, and vpõ the Articles of | that vndefiled and only vndoubted[ly] | true Christian faith, wh[ich the on-] | ly Catholicke (that is to say vni- | uersal) Churche of Christ | professeth." At the end of the book are the words, "From Wittonburge by Nicholas | Dorcastor. Ann. M. D. liiii. [1554] | the xiiii of May." The pages are unnumbered. From this the two following passages may be quoted:

This holy vniuersall church, as the sõne in brightness, hath beames of light, whereof it commeth to passe, that there be also particuler Churches or congregations. Where thoughe there be but two or three gathered together in y^e^ name of Christe, He is in the myddes amonge theim.

Almightye God (who euer was and is merciful) dyd promis him [man] againe euerlastynge lyfe, which was laied vp in his owne sonne: but so that (accordyng as he, euen God hymselfe by an euerlasting decree, had appointed) he wold be satisfyed, recompenced, and pacified againe, in the obedience of al his commaundementes, by the same nature of man: whych because of the corruption of sinne, that had entred in to it by disobedience, could not fully satisfye the law, and therefore God made an euerlasting couenaunt of mercye with mankinde, & promysed the blessed seede: namely, that hys owne son should put vpon him our nature, and therwith in innocency, satisfi the law, and bryng vs agayne into the fellowshyp of that euerlasting lyfe, whyche was lost thorow Adams disobediēce. . .

And what meane we els by thys, but euen to shew that it is an horrible thing, & farre out of order, that whyle the Lord in this his holy Sacramēt [*i. e.*, the Lord's Supper] offreth vs so large a couenaūt of mercy, we shal thincke scorne, to kepe the condicions thereof, and the rules that he hath prescribed vnto vs. No man doubtles (no not in Ciuile matters) would be so serued: wher like as it is no bargaine, till both parties be agreed, so cõmeth it to no perfect effecte, neither can it stand vnlesse the duties, cõdicions & promises be kept. Neuertheles this thing shal appeare muche more euident, if we compare the practise of these present miserable dayes, to the order of the Lord and his Apostles in the primitiue church, & lay thē one agaynst the other. As for the perfourmaūce of the condicions on hys party, ther is no doubt: For wher as he couenanteth with vs in thys holy Sacrament, so to feede, nourish, & cõfort our con-

sciences, that he wyl euen seale vs vnto him selfe, set hys marke vpõ vs, and take vs for hys own. He certifieth vs assuredly, that vpon such condicions, as we also vpon our allegiaunce, are boũd to kepe (whych we must either do, or els become vnworthy Receauers to our damnatiõ) we haue felowship with him, and are partakers of the same eternall lyfe, that he hym selfe hath purchased for vs in hys body and bloud.

It appears, therefore, that more than twenty-five years before Robert Browne wrote "A Booke Which Sheweth" there had been printed in English one book, at least, which touched indirectly upon various views which he later brought out in that work. For instance, the idea of particular or congregational churches is hinted at, and though the method of organizing such churches by covenant is not distinctly given, yet the fundamental points from which the church covenant idea might have been developed are here clearly delineated. They are namely these: God has made a covenant of mercy with man on certain "condicions." This covenant is offered in the Lord's Supper. But there can be no bargain between God and men till both parties be agreed, and the covenant cannot stand "vnlesse the duties, cõdicions & promises be kept." In other words, though God has made this covenant from his side, yet it is no real covenant until men accept the "condicions" God has imposed, and so make a covenant on their own part, and thereby come into fellowship with God. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper God seals men unto himself and sets his mark on them.

The very thought that Browne especially emphasizes, namely, that a covenant has two aspects, a God-ward

and a man-ward, and should be sealed in an outward manner, is all here. But there is much that he says which is not here, and there are also one or two points which he looks at in a different light. Where, then, did he obtain his views on the covenant? Were some borrowed, and the rest the product of his own thinking? Or was he quite original, as evidently by some he has been considered?

In 1646 Robert Baillie wrote: "The Brownists did borrow all their Tenets from the Anabaptists of old." [1] In 1645, also, in "A Dissvasive from the Errours of the Time," he had said:

> The Doctrine of the Anabaptists, who in great number fled over to England, when for their abominable and horrible Crimes, by Fire, and Water, and Sword, they were chased out of both the Germanies, is so like, and in many things so much the same with the Doctrine of the Brownists, that the derivation of the one from the other, seems to be very rational.

Rev. John Lewis says, also: [2]

> About 1580 one *Robert Brown* a rash forward young man espoused the tenet of the German Anabaptists, or the same uncharitable opinion of the church of *England* and its bishops and pastors, which *they* had conceived of the German protestant and Evangelical Churches, and insisted on the necessity of separating from them, and gathering new Churches, only with this difference, that he did not insist on *their* being again initiated by a new Baptism who joined themselves to him.

Probably these statements are somewhat exaggerated,

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[1] See Robert Baillie's "Anabaptism, | the True Fovntaine | of | Independency, / Brownisme, | { Antinomy, / Familisme. . London, 1646." P. 49.

[2] Rawlinson MSS. C. 410, p. 36 of one of the sections. Bodleian Library. Oxford.

but there is, doubtless, a measure of truth in them, and, in so far as the covenant idea is concerned, Baillie seems to be right. We cannot, therefore, believe that Robert Browne was as original[1] as he has sometimes been represented, and that he derived his views on church polity largely from a study of the Scriptures, though of course the views of dissenters may have suggested to him the advisability of studying the Bible, in order to see how many of the new ideas could be based on Scripture. At any rate, with the material at hand in the work to which reference has just been made, and with his probable knowledge of the Anabaptist and Scottish church covenant ideas, Robert Browne had everything ready at hand for the publication of such views on the covenant as appeared in "A Booke WHICH SHEWETH."

[1] It may be said, probably, that in general Robert Browne was not the originator of so many ideas concerning church polity as has sometimes been supposed, even though it should be admitted that he did not obtain all his views from Anabaptists. He was from first to last, it would seem, an admirable organizer of material he found at hand rather than an originator of new ideas. Even the views that church government may suitably be democratic, and that particular, or congregational, churches ought to be equal in power, acknowledging Christ as the only head, and maintaining but few officers of the true congregational type, had been printed in English twenty years before Browne published "A Booke WHICH SHEWETH," namely, in "A CONFES- | *sion of Fayth, made* | by common consent | by diuers reformed | Churches beyonde | the Seas: with | an | Exhortation to | the Reformation of | the Churche. | Imprinted at Lon- | don by Henry Wykes, | for Lucas Harrison | " [At end of the book] "1561. the ninth | Septemb."

The following quotations from three consecutive articles, on leaf 109, will be sufficient to show the truth of the above statement:

"29. As concerning the true Churche, we beleue that it ought to be governed, accordyng to the policie, that our sauiour Jesus Christ hath established: that is: that there bee Pastours, Superintendes, and Deacons, to thende that the puritie of the doctrine maye haue his course, that vices maie bee corrected and repressed, and that the poore and afflicted maie bee succoured in their necessities: and that the assemblies maie bee made, in the name of God, wherein bothe greate and small maie be edified.

"30. We beleue, that al true pastours, in what place so euer they be, have equal power and aucthoritie vnder one onely soueraigne and onely vniuersall bishop Iesus Christ: and for this cause, that no Churche oughte to pretend any rule or Lordship ouer other.

"31. We beleue that none ought of his owne authoritie to thrust himselfe into the gouernement of the church, but that it ought to be done by election, for that it is possible, and God permitteth it."

For instance, in connection with the Covenanters in Scotland he may first have heard the word covenant prominently mentioned in relation to a Christian church. In 1580, it will be remembered, the National Covenant was signed for the first time, and the expression must have become widely known, though at that time it was probably not as yet employed by the English Dissenters. In the same year, it is now generally admitted, Browne very likely came into contact with foreign Anabaptists, and doubtless learned their simple ideas of forming their brotherhood churches, or societies, by a "*Bund*," or covenant with God. Their idea was that a church may be composed only of believers. Browne accepted this view, but, following the opinion of his time in general, added "and their seede." Baptism as the sign, or seal, of the covenant, also was known to the Anabaptists. The view that God's covenant involved conditions and had two aspects, the one God-ward, the other man-ward, had been expressed in English nearly thirty years before 1582—a fact which suggests that Anabaptist influence began to be felt very early even by the English. Robert Browne now took these incoherent ideas and in the English tongue welded them into a systematic whole. In this respect he was truly an epoch-maker, and may justly be said to have given to the English nation for the first time a congregational church polity.

It may here be added that neither Browne nor any of his earlier followers seem to have been influenced to any great extent by the Scottish covenants. Of course early Brownist, or Independent, covenants were written sometimes, possibly in general, but direct evidence on this point is often wanting.

CHAPTER IV

SOME OF THE EARLIEST BROWNIST, OR INDEPENDENT COVENANTS

THE question now arises In what church, composed of Englishmen, was a covenant[1] first employed? One might possibly think, inasmuch as Browne's book, to which reference has previously been made, was published in Middelburg in 1582, that the first covenant would probably have been drawn up after that date in Holland. But this was not the case, as is shown by Robert Browne's work entitled "A Trve and Short Declaration, both of the Gathering and Ioyning together of Certaine Persons: and also of the Lamentable Breach and Division which fell amongst them," of which probably the only known copy is in Lambeth

[1] Probably one of the earliest expressions of the covenant idea in English occurs in "A Brife and Fayth | full declaration of the true | fayth of Christ, made by certayne | men susspected of heresye | in these articles folowyng | . . . | ¶ Anno. M. D. xlvii. | Per me I. B." The writer of this "declaration" had been suspected of being "a fauourer of the Anabaptistes." He denies the truth of this charge, and takes the same position in regard to baptism later adopted by Robert Browne. But evidently he had been strongly influenced by the Anabaptists, and this influence may be seen in his definition of baptism, as itself being or implying a "couenaunt." In the section entitled "The Sacrament of Baptysme," this author writes as follows:

"Thyrdely baptysme is a couenant of a good conscience to god. i. Pet. iii. namelye that he that in beliefe is baptised, bindeth him selfe or maketh a couenaunt with god: that from thens forth he wyll lyue after hys wyll. And of this couenauntes behalfe, whiche muste be done out of a cleane faythfull herte, hath the baptysme powre, and not for the waters sake, wherwith the fylthynesse of the fleshe myghte be washed awaye."

Yet after saying this, and that "baptisme without fayth may in no wyse be broked," the author, nevertheless, affirms that the infant children of believers ought to be baptized.

Palace Library, London. In this book the organization of Browne's church in Norwich, in 1580–1, is described as follows :[1]

This is to lay the foundacion of Mat. 18. to preach and Babtize in the name of the Father teaching to obserue & doe, whatsoeuer saieth Christ, I haue commanded you, & this is to overthrow the foundacion to teach a toleration & practiseing of things, which are cõtraie to the whole gouernment & kingdom of Christ, &c.

The Order Agreed On for the Gviding &

establishing of the companie in all Godlines, & such like This doctrine before being shewed to the companie, & openlie preached among them manie did agree thereto, & though much trouble and persecution did followe, yet some did cleaue fast to the trueth, but some Fell awaie fro when triall by pursuttes, losses & imprisonment cãe, & further increased then Robert, Barker, Nicolas Woedowes, Tatsel, Bond & sõe others, forsooke vs also & held back, and were afraied at the first. There was a day appointed & an order taken, for redresse off the former abuses, & for cleauing to the Lord in greater obediẽce. so a covenãt was made & ther mutual cõsent was geuẽ to hould to gether.

There were certaine chief pointes proued vnto them by the scriptures all which being particularlie rehersed vnto them with exhortation they agreed vpon them, & pronoũced their agrement to ech thing particularlie, saiing, to this we geue our consent. First therefore thei gaue their consent, to ioine themselues to the Lord, in one couenant & felloweshipp together, & to keep & seek agrement vnder his lawes & government : and therefore did vtterlie flee & auoide such like disorders & wickednes, as was mencioned before. Further thei agreed off those which should teach them, and watch for the saluation of

[1] Pp 19, 20.

their soules, whom thei allowed & did chose as able & meete ffor that charge. For thei had sufficient triall and testimonie thereoff by that which thei hard & sawe by them, & had receaued of others. So thei praied for their watchfulnes & diligence, & promised their obedience.

Likewise an order was agreed on ffor their meetinges together ffor ther exercises therin, as for praier, thanckesgiuing, reading of the Scriptures, for exhortation & edifiing, ether by all men which had the guift or by those which had a speciall charge before others. And for the lawefulnes off putting forth questions, to learne the trueth, as iff anie thing seemed doubtful & hard, to require some to shewe it more plainly, or for anie to shewe it himselfe & to cause the rest to vnderstand it. Further for noting out anie speciall matter of edifiing at the meeting, or for tolckīg seuerally theretō, with some particulars, iff none did require publique audience, or if no waightier matter were hādled of others. Againe it was agreed that anie might protest, appeale, complaine, exhort, dispute, reproue &c as he had occasion, but yet in due order, which Was then also declared. Also that all should further the kingdom off God in themselues, & especiallie in their charge & household, iff thei had anie, or in their freindes & companions & whosoeuer was Worthie. Furthermore thei particularlie agreed off the manner, howe to Watch to disorders, & reforme abuses, & for assembling the companie, for teaching priuatlie, & for warning and rebukeing both priuatlie & openlie, for appointing publick humbling in more rare judgemētes, and publik thankesgeuing in straunger blessinges, for gathering & testifiing voices in debating matters, & propounding them in the name off the rest that agree, for an order of chosing teachers, guides & releeuers, when thei want, for separating cleane from uncleane, for receauing anie into the fellowship, for presēting the dailie successe of the church, & the wantes thereof, for seeking to other churches to haue their help, being better reformed, or to bring them to reformation, for taking an

order that none contend openlie, nor persecute, nor trouble disorderedly, nor bring false doctrine, nor euil cause after once or twise Warning or rebuke.

Thus all things were handled, set in order & agreed on to the comfort off all, & soe the matter wrought & prospered by the good hand of God.

This account gives us at least the substance of the first known church covenant made in England. The same covenant may have been renewed also in Browne's church after it had moved to Middelburg.

The substance also, of possibly the next earliest church covenant to be found, of the date 1588 or earlier, is given in the "deposition of William Clerke, taken 8 March, 1592," as follows:

> He sayth he hath bene of the forsayd congregation [of Separatists in the neighborhood of London] *these foure or fyve years*, and made promise to stand with the sd. congregation so long as they did stand for the truth and glory of God, being then of that congregation at that tyme about twenty, or thereabouts.[1]

After his return from Middelburg in 1592, Francis Johnson became pastor of the above-mentioned brotherhood congregation. The covenants used in the church at Middelburg in 1591, and also in the congregation at London in 1592 or 1593, during Johnson's pastorates, have fortunately been preserved.

Some account of how Johnson came to employ a covenant in his church in Middelburg may be of interest here. Since 1589 or 1590, he had been pastor of "the church of English Merchants of the Staple" in that city. This was the church in which "Cartwright and Dudley

[1] Harleian MSS., 7042: p. 110. Cited in Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," pp. 255, 256, note 2.

Fenner had successively ministered," and therefore was not a Brownist congregation. In fact, Johnson had taken special pains to spy out the publications of the Separatists, and in 1591 he had the pleasure of seeing the whole edition of Barrowe and Greenwood's "Plaine Refutation" burned at Dort. He kept a copy for himself, however, that he might study their errors. The result was that he read the whole book, and evidently changed his views in a short time to such an extent that he drew up the following "Articles" (the term covenant is not used, but the document is in reality a covenant), the signing of which was withstood by Mr. Thomas Ferrers. Whether these articles were signed generally by the church is not known, but from the fact that Johnson was in London in 1592, and pastor of a Separatist church there, it may be inferred that his plan did not entirely please the church in Middelburg, for those who would not sign, even if they had formerly been members of the church, might be considered so no longer. These articles of Francis Johnson probably furnish us with the earliest known English church-covenant document, containing genuine Brownist-Separatist views, as our information of earlier covenants may be fragmentary, and is drawn either from books or from manuscripts concerning Brownist court proceedings. The text of the document in hand reads as follows :

Francis Johnson his articles,[1] w^ch^ he vrged to be vnder | written by the Englishe Marchants in Middleborough | in October. 1591. withstoode by me Thomas Ferrers, | then Deputie of the Companie there.

[1] The original MS. may be found in the MS. Department of the British Museum See Additional MSS. Press mark, 28, 571. P. 221.

Wee whose names are vnderwritten, doe beleeve and acknowledge the truthe of the Doctrine and faythe of our Lorde *Jesus Christe*, w^ch^ is revealed vnto vs in the Canon of the Scriptures of the olde and newe Testament.

Wee doe acknowledge, that *God* in his ordinarie meanes for the bringinge vs vnto and keepinge of vs in this faythe of *Christe*, And an holie *Obedience* thereof, hath sett in his Churche teachinge and rulinge *Elders*, *Deacons*, and Helpers : And that this his *Ordinance* is to continue vnto the ende of the worlde as well vnder *Christian princes*, as vnder *heathen Magistrates*.

Wee doe willinglie ioyne together to live as the *Churche* of *Christe*, watchinge one over another, and submittinge our selves vnto them, to whom the Lorde *Jesus* committeth the oversight of his Churche, guidinge and censuringe vs according to the rule of the worde of God.

To this ende wee doe promisse henceforthe to keepe what soever *Christe* our Lorde hath commanded vs, as it shall please him by his holie spiritt out of his worde to give knowledge thereof and abilitie there vnto.

His opinions and exposicōns vpon these fower Articles, as afore.

That for anie w^ch^ haue bene of this *Churche* and will not vnder-write these w^th^ promisse (as God shall inhable them) to stande to the forme and everie poynte of them, againste men and Angells vnto the deathe ; otherwise he may not be receaved as a member in this Churche.

And allso that any man once havinge adioyned him selfe to this *Englishe* churche in Middleboroughe, he cannot fynde any warrant by the worde of God, that after the same partie is to adioyne him selfe to anye other *Churche*, either in *Englande* or els where ; but there, as the *Discipline* is rightlie established, as in this *Churche*.

Evidently within a year after this covenant document was drawn up, Johnson went over to London, conferred

with Barrowe in the Fleet prison, and in the fall of 1592 was made pastor of the London congregation, while John Greenwood was elected teacher. Concerning the covenant that now began to be used in this church, Daniel Buck, scrivener, March 9, 1593, gave most valuable testimony :

> Being asked what vowe or promise hee made when hee came first to y^r^ Societie, hee aunswereth & sayth y^t^ he made y^s^ Protestation, viz :
>
> "That hee wold walke with y^e^ rest of y^m^ so longe as they did walke in y^e^ way of y^e^ Lorde, & as farr as might bee warranted by y^e^ word of God." [1]

Another of these earliest English church covenants, of which we have any account, is that of the Gainsborough-Scrooby-Leyden-Plymouth church of 1602, referred to in Cotton Mather's Magnalia,[2] and probably given in substance and expression in Bradford 6, and partially, at least, in Edward Winslow's "Hypocrisie Unmasked." [3] This church had its beginning at Gainsborough. It is thought to have remained intact from 1602 till 1605 or 1606, when some of the members removed to Scrooby, where John Robinson became their pastor. In 1607 or 1608 this section of the church went to Amsterdam, and in 1609 to Leyden. The other part of the church in 1607, with the pastor, John Smyth, later founder of the English General Baptists, crossed to Amsterdam.

Prof. Edward Arber, F. S. A., in his "Story of the

[1] Harleian MSS., 7042, p. 399. Cited by H. M. Dexter, D. D., in "The True Story of John Smyth." Boston, 1881, p. 69.

[2] Ed. 1702, Bk. I., p. 5.

[3] Pp. 97, 98. See Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 404.

Pilgrim Fathers," has suggested some new points in regard to the churches at Gainsborough and Scrooby that are important for us, as they bear indirectly upon the covenants used in these churches.

Speaking of the peasants of the Pilgrim District he says:

Herein, however, they were more fortunate in their intellectual development than Shakespeare. They had educated leaders. He had none.

Clyfton, Brewster, Robinson, and Smyth were all Cambridge University men; and but for them there never would have been any Pilgrim Fathers at all. So going back to the ultimate facts, we say that the Pilgrim movement originated in the rectory and church of Babworth in Nottinghamshire; and that it was mainly a Nottinghamshire movement.[1]

To this rectory, then, some forty-five months before Governor Bradford was born, came this Derbyshire man, the Rev. Richard Clyfton, *æt.* 33. He was what was then called a "forward [*advanced*] preacher, or a reformist."[2]

The same author makes the following valuable statements concerning John Smyth and John Robinson:

We have adduced, at pp. 133, 134, irrefutable evidence that, on the 22d March, 1605, the Rev. John Smyth was still a conformist minister, and preacher of the city of Lincoln. So that, at that date, he had not even come to Gainsborough, where, after nine months of doubting, he finally adopted the principles of the Separation. The formation of the Gainsborough Church cannot therefore be earlier than 1606.[3]

We are not aware of any evidence tending to prove in the slightest degree, that Robinson was *ever* a member of Smyth's church; and we have proved, at pp. 133, 134, that the Gainsborough Church was not established till 1606. Therefore if Robinson went north in 1604, he must have gone to Scrooby."[4]

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1 "The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606–1623 A. D.; as told by Themselves, their Friends, and their Enemies." London, Boston, and New York, 1897, p. 51.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 52. 3 *Ibid.*, p. 48. 4 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Concerning Clyfton, Professor Arber says :

"So that, although Clyfton deserted the Pilgrim church in 1609, he must ever be regarded as the senior of the leaders of that Separation."

The same author has the following statement concerning the Separatist movement :[2]

> The Separatist movement continued to grow ; but, as Governor Bradford tells us at page 70, the church at Scrooby was not formally organized till 1606, when the late rector of Babworth [Clyfton] became its pastor, and the Rev. JOHN ROBINSON became his assistant, with probably one or more deacons.

Thus it will be seen that these churches at Scrooby and Gainsborough were formed somewhat later than commonly has been supposed. The questions at once arise, whether these churches were organized separately and by the use of different covenants, and when ; also whether Smyth and Robinson were among those who originally covenanted together ; and finally, who suggested the use of a church covenant to these humble country people ?

Perhaps it may be impossible ever to answer these questions with very great certainty, but the Bradford manuscript[3] undoubtedly suggests that the people who formed these two churches at Gainsborough and Scrooby first covenanted together "as the Lord's free people" in one body, and later became "two distinct bodies or churches." They would thus probably use the same covenant when finally organized, and if Cotton Mather

[1] "The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606–1623 A. D. ; as told by Themselves, their Friends, and their Enemies." London, Boston, and New York, 1897, p. 52.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 54

[3] As given by Professor Arber in "The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers," pp. 134, 135.

is right, the first covenanting took place in 1602. Where this occurred we do not know, but whenever and wherever it took place may it not be the case that Cotton Mather has assigned too early a date for the final organization of the church, and that this really occurred in 1606 after John Smyth's arrival, and that before this date there was no church at all at Gainsborough or at best a very informal one?

In 1620 the majority of Robinson's church, under the spiritual guidance of Brewster, embarked for England in the "Speedwell," and thence, with some others, in the "Mayflower" for America, where they formed Plymouth colony and the so-called Mayflower Church, in which they seem to have employed the covenant originally made in Gainsborough.

Cotton Mather, in the reference above mentioned, says concerning the origin of the church:

> A Number of devout and serious Christians in the English Nation, finding the Reformation of the Church in that Nation, according to the WORD OF GOD, and the Design of many among the First Reformers, to labour under a sort of hopeless Retardation, they did, Anno 1602, in the North of England, enter into a COVENANT, wherein expressing themselves desirous, not only to attend the Worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, with a freedom from humane Inventions and Additions, but also to enjoy all the Evangelical Institutions of that Worship, they did like those Macedonians, that are therefore by the Apostle Paul commended, give themselves up, first unto God, and then to one another.

The text of the covenant itself is contained in the following passage from Bradford:[1]

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1 "Bradford's History 'Of Plimoth Plantation.' From the Original Manuscript." Boston, 1898, p. 13.

[6] So many therefore of these proffessors as saw y^e^ evill of these things, in thes parts and whose harts y^e^ Lord had touched w^th^ heavenly zeale for his trueth, they shooke of this yoake of antichristian bondage, and as y^e^ Lords free people, joyned them selves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in y^e^ fellowship of y^e^ gospell, to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.

Edward Winslow's recollection in 1646 of John Robinson's last word concerning this covenant, in his farewell address to the Pilgrim Fathers, is that "Here also he put us in mind of our Church-Covenant (at least that part of it) whereby wee promise and covenant with God and one with another, to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to us from his written Word." [1]

These, then, are the earliest known English church covenants that we can declare to be genuine. Doubtless others, also, were drawn up, of which we have no knowledge. It might, however, be well to say here that in the so-called "Crowle Records," which Doctor Dexter has shown to be a forgery, there is given the text of a church covenant which is claimed to be that of a Baptist church, made in 1599. The whole subject is perplexing, but it is not impossible that this may be a genuine covenant approximately of the date indicated, which has thus been incorporated in a mass of forged records. The text [2] of the covenant is as follows :

[1] Cited in Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 404.

[2] Cited in Doctor Dexter's "John Smyth." Boston, 1881, p. 64.

The First Church Covenant—
4 January, 1599

Wee, this Church of Christ (meeting at Epworth, Crowle and West Butterwick, in y^e^ County of Lincoln) whose names are underwritten, give up ourselues to y^e^ Lord, and one to another, according to y^e^ will of God, and do promise and covenant in y^e^ presence of Christ, to walke together in y^e^ lawes and ordinances of baptized belieuers, according to y^e^ rules of y^e^ gospel, and through Jesus Christ, He helping us.

It is interesting to note that Doctor Dexter, the keenest critic of the alleged "Crowle Records," declares[1] concerning this covenant:

> I make no objection to that [the covenant] as being an instrument probable for such use at that time; but I must question the plausibility of a small portion of its phraseology. The clause "whose names are underwritten," has no counterpart in any authentic early document of the sort which I have ever seen, and appears to have a somewhat later flavor. The act of covenanting in those days evidently emphasized itself as a deed of public engagement and avowal, rather than of more private mutual written contract.

Yet we know that the covenants of the Scotch were subscribed or "underwritten," and further, the covenant of Francis Johnson's church in Middelburg, of the date 1591, was "to be vnderwritten," and he had announced also, that "anie w^ch^ haue bene of this *Churche* and will not vnderwrite these w^th^ promisse . . . to stande to the forme and everie poynte of them, . . otherwise he may not be receaved as a member in this Churche." Therefore this Crowle covenant, though contained in a forged

[1] "John Smyth," p. 69.

record, would seem to approve itself even by Doctor Dexter's judgment as an entirely "probable instrument" of the time. The use of the words "The first Church Covenant," rather than the document itself, may somewhat be questioned, for the expression "Church Covenant" was not much employed till at least thirty-five or forty years later, and the word "First" implies that the writer either desired to have the reader accept this as the first church covenant ever drawn up, or knew of other later covenants used by the same church, and in the latter case it might indicate that the record was written considerably later than the date mentioned. A final judgment is difficult, but it is possible that this covenant is a genuine document of the time indicated, with other than the original names subscribed.

CHAPTER V

THE GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF BROWNE'S CHURCH COVENANT IDEA BY THE EARLY INDEPENDENT LEADERS

ROBERT BROWNE'S church covenant idea seems generally, if not always, to have been accepted by the earliest Independent churches. In fact, without some such basal idea it would have been almost impossible to form a strictly Separatist church. Yet the word "covenant" does not appear to have been used by all the earliest Independent leaders. For the word "covenant" such expressions as "articles" to be signed, "a promise," "an agreement," etc., were sometimes substituted. Oftentimes also the covenant idea seems to be implied by the use of such phraseology as "joyned by their willing consent."

The degree in which the earliest Independent leaders accepted the church covenant idea may be estimated somewhat from the following quotations.

Barrowe and Greenwood, who were working for a Congregational polity between Brownism and Presbyterianism, in a paper sent to Cartwright about 1589, define the true church as

> A companie of Faithful people : separated from the vnbeleuers and heathen of the land : gathered in the name of CHRIST, whome they truelie worship, and redily obey as thier only King Priest

and Prophet [notice that these last words occur often in the text of later covenants, especially in America] : ioyned together as members of one bodie." [1]

In this quotation the word "covenant" is not used, and in Barrowe's chief treatise, entitled a "Brief Discouerie of the False Church," of the date 1590, the word "covenant" is evidently not employed.[2]

The following citation[3] from the Confession of Faith of the exiled English church in Amsterdam, originally drawn up in 1596, clearly indicates that the covenant idea was employed by the Separatists in Amsterdam:

And being come forth of this antichristian estate vnto the freedom and true profession of Christ, besides the instructing and well guyding of their owne families, they are willingly to ioyne together in christian communion and orderly covenant, and by free confession of the faith and obediēce of Christ to vnite themselves into peculiar and visible congregations : wherin, as members of one body wherof Christ is the only head, they are to worship and serve God according to his word, remembering to keep holy the Lords day.

After the accession of James I. to the throne a petition was sent to him, in which the differences between the Separatists and the Church of England were set forth. The word "covenant" does not occur in this, but may be implied in the following:

That every true visible church, is a company of people called and separated from the world by the word of God, and joyned

[1] Cited in Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," pp. 222–223.

[2] Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 237.

[3] Article 33 of the Confession, as printed in a work entitled "Certayne Letters | trans | lated into English | being first written | in Latine. . . Together with the Confession of faith prefixed : where vpon | the said letters were first written. | Printed in the yeare, 1602."

together by voluntarie profession of the faith of Christ, in the fellowship of the Gospell. [1]

In a letter of Hugh Bromhead,[2] one of John Smyth's faithful followers, written about 1608, before Smyth's separation, to William Hamerton of London, is the following direct statement concerning the general use of the church covenant in the English churches of Holland :

"Thirdly, we seek the fellowship of His faithful and obedient servants, and together with them to enter covenant with the Lord," etc.

In 1610 John Robinson published his "Ivstification of Separation from the Church of England.' In this he says[3] :

A company consisting though but of two or three separated from the world whether vnchristian, or antichristian, and gathered into the name of Christ by a covenant made to walk in all the wayes of God knowen vnto them, is a church, and so hath the whole power of Christ.[4]

In a work by Henry Jacob, however, printed at Leyden in 1610, and entitled "The | Divine Beginning | and Institution of Christ's true | Visible or Ministerial Church," occurs the following definition of a Christian church,[5] in which we might naturally expect that the word "covenant" would appear; but it does not, as will be seen :

A true Visible & Ministeriall Church of Christ is a nomber of faithfull people joyned by their willing consent in a spirituall out-

[1] From section cited in Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 307.
[2] In J. Hunter's "Founders of New-Plymouth," London, 1854. Appendix N, p. 167.
[3] P. 125.
[4] Cited in Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 393.
[5] P. 2.

ward society or body politike, ordinarily coming togeather into one place, instituted by Christ in his New Testament, & having the power to exercise Ecclesiastical government and all Gods other spirituall ordinances (the meanes of salvation) in & for it selfe immediately from Christ.

The absence of the word "covenant" in this passage is a little surprising, for Henry Jacob is supposed to have adopted John Robinson's views in the same year in which this was printed. Furthermore, we know that Mr. Jacob employed a covenant in organizing his church in London in 1616.

In a letter[1] signed by John Robinson and William Brewster, dated Leyden, December 15, 1617, to Sir Edwin Sandys, in reply to a letter of his dated London, November 12, 1617, occurs the following direct reference to the covenant:

4. We are knit together as a body in a more strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord, of the violation whereof we make [great] conscience; and by virtue whereof we do hold ourselves straightly tied to all care of each other's good, and of the whole by every, and so mutual.

[1] See Nathaniel Morton's "New Englands Memorial," 1669. Reprinted at Boston, 1855, pp. 267–269.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCH COVENANT IDEA IN DISFAVOR

WE have already noticed that Robert Browne adopted the Anabaptist principle that a Christian church is formed of members in personal covenant union with God and with one another. We have now to note, however, that he refused to accept in full one, and rejected utterly another, requisite in joining any Anabaptist congregation, namely, profession of faith and baptism in connection therewith. Browne believed a church should be composed solely of believers and their children, and that a new baptism was unnecessary. In those early days men were seeking to discover the apostolic way of organizing churches, and it is no wonder, therefore, that soon after the publication of Browne's "A Book Which Sheweth," the question arose as to whether a church covenant was employed in the New Testament churches. This naturally led to adverse criticism of the church covenant idea.

Stephen Bredwell, in his book entitled "The Rasing | of the Foundations | of Brownisme," printed at London in 1588, was one of the earliest publicly to antagonize the views of Robert Browne. Therefore what he says concerning the true method of forming a church, and concerning Browne's method, it is important for us to know. The following citations clearly give his ideas :

A Church which consisteth of beleeuing people, builded so by fayth, vppon Iesus Christ the heade corner stone is in a two folde condition to be considered : the first is the verie knitting vnto Christ, wherein alone standeth the life and beeing of a Church, and in nothing else.[1]

And like as euerie one particularly is iustifyed for a Christian, through their onely vniting with Christ by fayth, euen so are manie together iustified for a Church of Christ, through such vnion with him onely. And then, if this vnion giue it the forme of a Church, it muste necessarilie bee a Church, before it practise discipline, because our discipline in question hath no place, but in an vnited bodie, or congregation.[2]

The other thing that I would haue the reader perfect in is this : that this *Troublechurch Browne*, not receyuing the loue of the trueth, touching the being of a Church in Christ by faith, but striuing for other grounds and essentiall causes thereof, which the Lorde neuer acknowledged, is (in a heauie, though iust iudgement), compassed about with a strong delusion, so as hee hath not abstained from defiling the verie couenant of life, to his owne, and all that follow after him, most certaine destruction, if the balme of Gods grace bee not sent in time to heale them. For in the forepart of his answere to maister Cartwright, he miserablie confoundeth the couenant of the lawe with the couenant of the Gospel. Whereof the first hath the condition of workes a part : the other is made simplie without condition of workes, if we belieue only. He abuseth to his purpose a number of places, all which proue that the establishment of the couenāt of grace hath necessarily good works ioyned withall, as effects or fruits, but not as causes, and so any part of the couenant, as he grossely supposeth.[3]

The matter of a church wee haue. Let us nowe see what may be the fourme. . . For as it is likewise agreeable to all reason, that the vniting and knitting together of Christ and Christians, bee graunted the formall cause of a Church. Nowe this vnition is by two meanes, the one eternall, the other seruing but for this life. . . The tēporal vnition, which (as I sayd) serueth for this life, is by faith : which shall cease in the day of the reuelation of

[1] P. 73. [2] P. 74. [3] Pp. 112, 113.

the Saincts of God. . . Meane time, faith is as the engrafting of the braunches into the stock.[1]

Here we meete with that foolishe and vayne exception of *Browne* agaynst Ma. C.[artwright] namely, *That Christ is the life and essence of the Church, and not faith,* which is, as though faith had not direct relation to Christ, and Christ to faith in this consideration of a Church, wherein neyther can fayth bee considered without Christ, nor yet Christ as theyr head without faith.[2]

Evidently there were those who had felt the truth of what Bredwell and others of like opinion had said in criticism of Browne's views on church polity, and thereby had been led to look into the matter of apostolic church government more thoroughly, or what more probably is the case, had come into such close touch with Dutch Anabaptist views, that they felt it their duty to alter their church practice. Thus, in 1608 or 1609, John Smyth, one of the most talented Independent leaders, reorganized his church, then in Amsterdam, and on profession of faith baptized himself and those in agreement with him. Shortly after, Smyth and his associates, Helwys and Murton, came into conflict, chiefly on the question of succession[3] in the ministry, and Smyth and his

[1] Pp. 80, 81. [2] P. 83.

[3] In regard to the question, as to why John Smyth was driven out from his own church, there seems to have been some diversity of opinion among Baptist writers. Dr. B. Evans, even, was apparently in doubt on this point, for he says in "The Early English Baptists" (Vol. I., p. 208):

"It is admitted, on all hands, that from some cause or other, the church over which Smith and Helwys presided was divided, but the cause of division is not so manifest. Smith with some twenty-four persons, was excluded from the church."

Yet on pages 209, 210, Doctor Evans quotes a letter from "Thomas Helwys, William Piggott, Thos. Seamer, John Morton" to the Waterland church, to which Smyth's party had applied for membership, which answers this question as clearly as could be desired. The letter says:

"We are . . . stirred up to write to you, praying you, . . that you will take wise counsel, . . how you deal in this cause betwixt us and those who are justly, for their sins, cast out from us. And the whole cause in question being Succession (for so it is in deed and in truth).

"And now for the other question that elders must ordain elders; or if this be a

sympathizers were cast out of the church. He then sought fellowship with the Waterlanders, a branch of the Mennonites, but for reasons presumably deemed sufficient they declined to receive him.

In 1612 Smyth died, doubtless still being pastor of the little excommunicated group. Probably in the year of his death Helwys and Murton founded in London the first general, or Arminian, Baptist church on English soil, "and thus" "the Baptist fellowship of England and America traces its direct sources back to the same fountain at Gainsborough from which Plymouth Congregationalism flowed forth."[1] In the next few years, also, other general Baptist churches were founded at "Lin-

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true perpetual rule; then from whom is your eldership come? And if one church might once ordain, then why not all churches always?"

No answer to the question in hand could be clearer than this, especially as interpreted by Thomas Helwys' book, entitled "An Ad- | vertisement or admonition, | unto the Congregations, which | men call the New Fryelers, in the lowe | Countries. wrirten in Dutche. | And Publiched in Englis." This work was printed in 1611, and treats to considerable length the points of difference between the main church and the Smyth party.

But our fullest information concerning the cause of this unfortunate affair probably is given us in John Smyth's own words, in "The Last Booke of John Smyth, called the Retractation of His Errors and the Confirmation of the Truth," published by his followers after the close of his stormy career. He says:

"I hold that succession is abolished by the Church of Rome, and that there is no true ministry derived from the apostles through the Church of Rome to England, but that the succession is interrupted and broken off. Succession being so broken off, it may, by two or three gathered together in the name of Christ, be renewed and assumed again, and herein there is no difference between Master Helwys and me: but Master Helwys saith that although there be churches already established, ministers ordained, and sacraments administered orderly, yet these are not bound to join to those former churches established; but may, being as yet unbaptized, baptize themselves as we did, and proceed to build churches of themselves, disorderly as I take it. Herein I differ from Master Helwys, and therefore he saith I have sinned against the Holy Ghost. . . It is not lawful for every one that seeth the truth to baptize, for then there might be as many churches as couples in the world, and none have anything to do with the other, which breaketh the bond of love and brotherhood in churches; but in these outward matters I dare not any more contend with any man, but desire that we may follow the truth of repentance, faith, and regeneration, and lay aside dissension for mint, cummin, annised."—*Dr. John Waddington's "Congreg. History," 1567–1700. London. 1874. Pp. 189 plus.*

[1] In "A History of the Congregational Churches," by Prof. Williston Walker, p. 59. New York. 1894.

coln, Sarum, Coventry, and Tiverton." [1] As to whether there had not been in England during the sixteenth century English Anabaptist churches, or churches which had maintained the idea of baptism on profession of faith, it can only be said that there may have been, probably were such, but concerning them we know little or nothing. English Baptist churches, at any rate, as we know them are not Anabaptist churches, but rather an outgrowth of Independency.[2]

The question now arises, Was a covenant used in the organization of these earliest Baptist churches composed of English people? This is a question most difficult satisfactorily to answer.

It would certainly seem probable that those who had come directly from Independent churches should have employed in general the same method in forming their own new churches. Or, on the other hand, was their revulsion toward the falsity of their former views so great that they impulsively gave up the old and made, so to say, an entirely new church polity?

For an answer we must turn to the writings of the new Baptist leaders and those with whom they came in contact.

John Smyth has often been severely criticised for changing his views so often, as if that indicated a weak-

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[1] In a letter dated November 18, 1626, evidently from the church of Murton and Denys, to "Hans de Ries and Renier Wybrant," printed in Dr. B. Evans' work entitled, "The Early English Baptists," Vol. II., p. 26.

[2] In Robert Baillie's "Anabaptism, | the True Fountaine | of | *Independency, Brownisme,* | *Antinomy, Familisme.*" London, 1646, occurs the following, which bears on this point: "The soberest Anabaptists do embrace the whole way of the rigid separation. The Brownists did borrow all their Tenets from the Anabaptists of old, it is but equall that the Anabaptists this day should seek back again their Fathers debt from the Brownists."

ness of mind. But in reality it certainly appears that no one ever carried out the fundamental principles of Congregationalism with greater precision and consistency than this same John Smyth. He was a Congregationalist of the true type. He had covenanted with his church in 1606 "to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them," and it is, therefore, not surprising to us to find that in 1608, about the time he accepted Baptist views, he should declare in the introductory note to his book entitled, "The Differences of the | Churches of the seperation : | Contayning, | A Description of the Leitovrgie | and | Ministerie of the visible Church : | Annexed : | As a Correction and Svpplement to a little | treatise lately published, bearing title : | Principles and Inferences, concerning the visible Church" :

"Wee will never be satisfied in endevoring to reduce the worship and ministery of the Church, to the primitive Apostolique institution from which as yet it is so farr distant."

This sentence contains the true ambition of John Smyth, and gives in a few words the goal toward which Baptists ever have striven, for though nominally he may have been a Brownist when he wrote these words, yet from them it may be seen that he was striving for something better than Brownism. Yet in this same introductory note Smyth states that he believed that already the Separatists had brought back apostolic practices into their churches in three chief respects. He says :

The absolute necesssitie of the true constitution appeareth, because if the Church be truly constituted and framed, ther is a

true Church : the true spowse of Christ : if the Church be falsely constituted, ther is a false Church : & she is not the true spowse of Christ : Herein therfor especially are those auncient brethren to be honoured, that they have reduced the Church to the true Primitive & Apostolique constitution which consisteth in these three things. 1. The true matter which are sayntes only. 2. The true forme which is the vniting of them together in the covenant. 3. The true propertie which is communion in all holy things, & the power of the L. Jesus Christ, for the maintayning of that communion.

At this time, then, John Smyth believed that the Separatist churches had already been "reduced" to the "true forme which is the vniting of them together in the covenant." Did he change his mind concerning this later? Apparently within a comparatively short time, for in a book entitled "The Character of the Beast : | or | the false Constitution of the Church. | Discovered | " printed in 1609, he says :

So the anabaptists (as you cal them) doe not set vp a new covenant & Gospel, though they set vp a new or rather the old Apostolique baptisme which Antichrist had overthrowne : & whereas you say they have no warrant to baptisme themselves, I say, asmuch as you have to set vp a true Church, yea fully asmuch : For if a true Church may be erected which is the most noble ordinance of the New Testament, then much more baptisme, for baptisme is the visible forme of the Church [not the church covenant as he himself while a Brownist had insisted], as Disciples are the matter : . . . or if they must recover them [all Christ's visible ordinances], men must beginne so to doe, & then two men joyning together may make a Church (as you say) : Why may they not baptize seing they cannot conjoyne into Christ but by baptisme, . . . but it is evident that Christ's Commandements must bee obeyeed, Ergo, this commandement of having & vsing the communion of the Church, Ministery, VVorship & Gouernment those Holy meanes of Salvation which the Lord of his mercy hath given

vs with his covenant, & commaunded vs to use : & therefore if all the commandements of God must bee obeyed, then this of baptisme, & this warrant is sufficient for assuming baptisme : Now for baptizing a mans self ther is as good warrant, as for a man Churching himself : For two men singly are no Church, joyntly they are a Church, & they both of them put a Church vppon themselves, so may two men put baptisme vppon themselves : For as both those persons vnchurched, yet have powre to assume the Church each of them for himself with others in communing. So each of them vnbaptized hath powre to assume baptisme for himself with others in communion.

Here, certainly, Smyth does not say that he rejects entirely the church covenant idea, but now he seems to regard baptism as of more consequence than the church covenant, for he says that baptism is the "visible form" of the church, whereas he had written in the preceding year that the "true forme" of a church was the "vniting together . . . in the covenant." Indeed, from this time the word "covenant" does not seem to have been much used by Smyth. In the confession, signed solely by himself, in defining the church of Christ, he says simply :

"The church of Christ is a company of the faithful ; baptized after confession of sin and of faith, endowed with the power of Christ," [1] and, further, in "A | Declaration of Faith | of | English People | Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland," printed in 1611, which seems to have agreed with Smyth's views on this point, it is said [2] concerning the church and the entrance of members, merely :

[1] See Dr. B. Evans' "Early English Baptists," Vol. I., p. 254. Appendix F. Article 12.

[2] "Confessions of Faith, and other Public Documents, illustrative of the History of the Baptist Churches of England in the 17th Century." Hanserd Knollys Society. London, 1854, p. 6.

10. That the church of Christ is a company of faithful people, separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God, being knit unto the Lord, and one unto another, by baptism, upon their own confession of the faith, and sins.

13. That every church is to receive in all their members by baptism, upon confession of their faith and sins, wrought by the preaching of the gospel, according to the primitive institution and practice. And therefore churches constituted after any other manner, or of any other persons, are not according to Christ's testament.

John Robinson also, in his work entitled "Of Religious Communion | Private & Publique. | With the silenceing of the clamours raysed by Mr Thomas Helvvisse agaynst our reteyning the Baptism receaved in | Engl: & administering of Bapt: unto Infants. | . . Printed Anno 1614," has given an interesting account of the organization of Smyth's Baptist church, in which he clearly states that this church was "gathered by baptism," and that Smyth and his followers "came together to erect a new Ch: by baptism." No mention is made of the use of a covenant. The passage reads[1]:

> Lastly, if the Ch: be gathered by baptism, then will Mr Helw: his Ch: [John Smyth had died in 1612] appear to all men to be built vppon the sand, considering the bapt: it had, & hath: which was, as I have heard from themselves, on this manner. Mr Smith, Mr Helw: & the rest haveing vtterly dissolved, & disclaymed their former Ch: state & ministery, came together to erect a new Ch: by baptism: vnto which they also ascribed so great virtue, as that they would not so much as pray together, before they had it. And after some streyning of courtesy, who should begin, . . Mr Smith baptized first himself, & next Mr Helwis, & so the rest, making their particular confessions.

[1] P. 48.

This quotation lays great stress on baptism as the fundamental factor in forming a new church. As Baptists we do the same to-day, yet most of our churches in America, at least in the North, make use of a church covenant, and that Smyth's party still continued to use some informal covenant formula, is made probable by the fact that they were attacked not for failure to use a covenant, as they certainly might have been had they failed in this respect, but for their heresy in making a new baptism fundamental in the organization of a church, and therefore of more importance than the church covenant.

That Smyth's party in reality did still maintain the use of their church covenant (though possibly the word "covenant" was no longer employed by them), even after they had been exiled from their own church, is rendered certain by a letter of Lubbert Gerritis, one of the principal Waterland ministers at Amsterdam to the church at Leeuwarden, concerning "the English persons of whom formerly they got intelligence, who long ago entreated by iterations to unite with our church."[1]

This letter states the custom of Smyth's little company in admitting members in the following detached clause: "and after this [-that] they have baptized him [a candidate for membership], receiving the promise from the christened one that he will bend himself under the whole Gospel, with the doctrine of it, it might be that they did understand it or did not yet understand it." This last clause resembles much in thought the expression, "made known unto them, or to be made known unto them," in Smyth's covenant made at Gainsborough

[1] See Dr. B. Evans' "Early English Baptists." Vol. I., pp. 211–213.

in 1606, and therefore it seems probable that he used throughout his short but checkered career, this same simple but expressive formula, though after 1609 he emphasized faith and baptism, not the church covenant, as fundamental in the organization of Christian churches. Thus even with him the church covenant had already begun to be of only secondary importance.

The letter above mentioned also says: "Our [the Waterland] ministers have . . . most perfectly examined them [those left of Smyth's company] as regards the doctrine of salvation and the government of the church, and also inquired for the foundation and form of their baptism and we have not found that there was any difference at all, neither in the one nor the other thing, between them and us." In other words, these Waterlanders, a branch of the Mennonites, may also have used some informal covenant formula, though such an inference may not necessarily be correct. The statement is merely that the Waterlanders had the same church government as the church of which Smyth had been pastor, and his church certainly used an informal covenant formula, styled in this letter a "promise."

Now, did Helwys and Murton also follow John Smyth's example and employ covenants in organizing the first Baptist churches in England? For answer we must appeal solely to the writings of Helwys and Murton, for no early records of these churches seem to have been preserved.

The first work which we may consult on this point was published by Thomas Helwys in 1611. It is entitled "An Ad- | vertisement or admonition, | unto the Congregations, vvhich | men call the New Fryelers, in

the lowe | Countries wrirten in Dutche, | And Publiched in Englis." In this Helwys says :[1]

But these men [Smyth and those who had remained faithful to him, who had decided that after all, there ought to be some "succession" in religious customs, when they had once been rightly established, so that not every two or three persons could come together and at their own pleasure form a church] had rather heare in your Church or congregation fyve words without anie vnderstanding, then Ten thousand with vnderstanding in a congregation or Church gathered together by the preaching of the gospell of Iesus Christ, and baptized into his name vpon the confession of their faith and sinnes.

This they knew was our beginninge.

In the same work he also says :[2]

And so is this libertie hidden from their [of Smyth and his party] eies (you all that teach that doctrine being instruments there of) that they may joyne thē selves to gether in the covenant of the New Testament, & so be the church & Temple of God them selves as well as you or anie people : and through the gracious blessing of god, which he hath promissed shal be vpon them, they so doeing and walking in his waies, they may, and shall growe to be a most holy people.

The next work of importance touching the point in hand is that by John Robinson, entitled "Of Religious Communion | Private & Publique. | With the silenceing of the clamours raysed by M^r^ Thomas | Helvvisse agaynst our reteyning the Baptism receaved in | Engl : & administering of Bapt : unto Infants. | . . Printed Anno 1614." In this the following very clear statement from Helwys, concerning the covenant, is quoted :[3]

"Helw. *This is the Covenant*, (sayth the Lord) *that I*

[1] P. 40. [2] P. 53. [3] P. 70.

will make with the house of Israell, I will put my law in theyr inward partes, & write it in theyr hearts, & I wilbe theyr God, & they shalbe my people Ier : 31. 33. Hebr : 8 : 10. *And our Saviour Christ declares this more fully,* Mark 16. 16. *where he sayth, Go yee into all the world, & preach the gospell : he that shall beleiv & be baptized, shalbe saved. And here* (sayth he) *is the new Covenant set down both on Gods behalf, & theyrs with whom it is made. On Gods that he would write his law in mens hearts, by the power of his spirit in the preaching of the gospell, & wilbe theyr God, & save them : & on the peoples behalf, to beleiv the gospell, & to be baptized.*"

In 1615 also, Helwys, or Murton, which one is uncertain, printed a book of "OBIECTIONS : | Answered by way of Dialo- | gue, wherein is proved | By the Law of God ; | By the law of our Land : | And by his Ma^ties^ many testimonies | That no man ought to be persecuted | for his religion, as he testifie his alle- | geance by the Oath, appointed by Law." In this work the author says :[1]

So now every spirituall Israelite with whome the Lord is, & whose spirit the Lord stirreth vp are commaunded, to go and build, and the Lord wil prosper them in riseing vp and building, though some be more excellent in the busines then others, the begining of which spirituall building, is first to beget men a new by the immortal seed of Gods word, so makeing them liveing stones, & therevpon to couple them together a spirituall house vnto God. 1. Pet. 2. vpon the confession of their faith / by baptisme / as the scriptures of the new testament every where teach, as before is shewed.

Later in the same work[2] the author says further :

I affirme that the faithfull have right to this covenant of life and salvation onely upon their repentance and faith, and not

[1] P. 66. [2] Pp. 68, 69.

otherwise. . . God hath promised life and salvation by Christ to none that are vnder condemnation but onely by repentance and faith : let any shew the contrary if they be able. If any say as some foolishly have done, being vrged/ that it is the covenāt of the visible church : what covenant is that but the covenant of life and salvation made to the faithfull, Christs body and church.

John Murton published one more work that we cannot afford to overlook. It was printed in 1620, and is entitled "A | Discription | of what God | hath *Predestinated* | Concerning | Man. |

These are Murton's mature views, and are therefore important. He says :[1]

First I say and proue : neither circumcision nor baptisme, are seales of the couenāt of life and saluation ; that which is now the seale of life and saluation was euer the same, which is the holy Spirit of promise.

Later occurs the following passage :[2]

Againe, (it is granted by the aduersary, and it is a truth, that) the Couenant in Ier 31. and other places, in the *Hebrew* signifieth a compact or agreement, vpon a difference between two or more ; which in the new Testament, is turned into a word signifying a will or Testament : So that this is agreed vpon on all sides, two parties must be in this Couenant, agreeing and promising by mutuall accord for the thinges to be done.

The author says further :[3]

But first I will lay down a maine foundatiō, which being sufficiently proued, the euident truth shall plainly appear : and this it is ; That the members and Churches of *Christ*, are so made ; both by *Faith* and *Baptisme*, and not by the one only, which being true ; it will follow, that neither the Church & members of

[1] P. 145. [2] P. 149. [3] Pp. 154-156.

Rome, are members and Church of *Christ*, because *Faith* is neither required nor performed thereto ; nor yet any profession of people, that seperate from *Rome* as from no Church of *Christ*, retayning *Romes* Baptisme, and building new Churches without Baptisme. . . And *Christ* promiseth his presence vnto two or 3. so gathered into his name : so that to be gathered into the name of CHRIST, by being made Disciples and baptised, is, to be made members of his body (which is his church) of his Flesh, and of his bone : plainely confirmed, wee are all by one Spirit, baptised into one body : as also, except a man be borne of water and the Spirit, hee cannot enter into the Kingdome of God. *Thus* Christ made Disciples, wee must be the sonnes of God by Faith, and put on *Christ* by Baptisme, . . and wee are made partakers of *Christ*, by hauing the beginnings, which beginnings are *Repentance*, *Faith*, and *Baptisme*, other beginnings, or foundation can no man lay.

Somewhat later in the work Murton says :[1]

The Eunuch was a member of *Christ Iesus*, by faith and baptisme, and by vertue of the same might remaine in any particular Church of *Christ* where hee would, for in communion all must liue ; . . was euer Church of the new Testament made by a couenant without baptisme ? there is not the least showe for it. In this they [John Robinson and his church] runne to *Israels renewed couenant*, wherein againe they acknowledge Rome and England true Churches in their foundation : and when they ioyned to them, they ioyned into Gods couenant : and hauing broken it, they renew it againe : this they cannot auoid. Now as these two, the one receiuing the other, became a Church as they say, if one of these had sinned, I would aske Ioh. Rob. if the other had not beene bound to cast him out, or to separate from him, which is all one. That was their owne grounds of old, and from *Math.* 18. but they haue turned their old profession vpside downe. *Francis Iohnson* in one manner, and Iohn Rob. in another, that a man cannot now tell what are their grounds.

[1] Pp. 169, 170.

In a book entitled "A Defence | of the Doc | trine Propoun- | ded by the Synode at Dort: against Iohn Mvrton and | his Associates, in a | Treatise intutled; *A Description* | *what* God, &c. | With | the Refutation of | their Answer to a Writing touching | Baptism. | By Iohn Robinson. | Printed in the year, 1624," are the following passages, referring to Murton's mature views concerning the formation of churches of Christ:

Now followeth our main foundation, that *as the infants of Abraham*, and *of the Israelites his posterity, were taken into the Church-covenant*, or *covenant of life and salvation*, as they [Murton and his associates] call it (and rightly in a true sense) *with their parents, and circumcised: so are the infants of the faithfull now, and to receiv accordingly the seal of Baptism:* to which they *say, and proue* (as they say) *that neither Circumcision was, nor Baptism is a seal of the Covenant of salvation, but the spirit of promise which is ever the same.*[1]

Murton and his associates teach:

That members, and Churches of Christ are made both by faith, and baptism, and not by the one only.[2]

They oft say, but never proue, that Churches are gathered by *baptism.*[3]

From the above quoted passages alone we are obliged to draw our conclusions as to the method used in forming the earliest Baptist churches in England. One point is clear, namely, that from 1611 at least Murton and Helwys emphasized repentance, faith, and especially baptism as the means of "gathering" or organizing a Christian church. It would also appear that even from 1608 or 1609 they had held this view with Smyth, and

[1] P. 164. [2] P. 180. [3] P. 193.

had formed their first church by baptism, though as we have seen, they probably made also covenant promises. But after Smyth and his followers had been driven out, Helwys and Murton evidently continued to modify their opinion till the idea of a church covenant became of no importance.

From this time their churches were to be "gathered" by faith and baptism. With them baptism had come to take the place of a church covenant, for one now entered the church by baptism. However, in a sense the covenant idea was still maintained by them, but not the church covenant idea of Browne. Baptist churches were not to be outside the covenant promises because they did not use an explicit church covenant. Baptism is, as it were, the act of making an implicit covenant, or rather is the means of entering into the new covenant, which is not a church covenant, but is a "covenant of grace and salvation," the covenant of the New Testament, which always remains the same, has been made forever on God's part, and the benefits of which may be had by any who believe the gospel and are baptized.

It is therefore probable that even when Helwys and Murton founded the first Baptist church in England at London, no explicit church covenant was employed, and if not then, certainly not later, when other churches were formed at "Lincoln, Sarum, Coventry, and Tiverton." It is unfortunate, however, that no early records of these churches appear to have been preserved. The present record book of the church at Tiverton begins in 1678, the first one having been lost during the troublous times of the Civil War.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER EARLY CHURCH COVENANTS IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA BEFORE 1640

COVENANTS continued to be used by the followers of Robert Browne, and in 1616 Henry Jacob organized at London the first important Independent church on English soil. This church very likely came in time to embrace other gatherings, or congregations of Independents in the metropolis. It was formed in the following manner : [1]

Standing together, they joined hands, and solemnly covenanted with each other, in the presence of Almighty God : To walk together in all Gods wayes and ordinances, according as he had already revealed, or should further make them known to them.

"The Records of An Antient Congregation of Dissenters from w^ch^ many of y^e^ Independ*a*nt & Baptist churches in London took their first rise," [2] namely Jacob's church, of which the earliest covenant has just been given, refer

[1] From Neal, "Hist. Puritans," 2d, 1837, Vol. I., p. 462. Cited by Dr. H. M. Dexter in "John Smyth," p. 69.

The organization of Henry Jacob's church by a covenant seems to have made his name prominent among Dissenters for among the Boswell Papers, preserved in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum, Vol. I., p. 146, is a letter which says, in speaking of English refugees who came to Holland : "Some are Jacobites who require a New Covenant for members of a church to make before they can be communicants."

[2] Preserved in the so-called Gould MS., now in possession of Principal Gould, Regent's Park College, London.

to a renewal of the covenant in 1630, during the pastorate of Mr. Lathrop. The record reads :

COVENANT RENEWED.

Whilst Mr Lathrop was an Elder here some being greived against one that had his Child then Baptized in ye Common Assemblies, & desireing & urging a Renouncing of them, as Comunion wth them, Mr . . . Can also then walking [1] Saints where he left Mr How (he going wth Some to Holland) He desireing that ye Church wth Mr Lathorp would renew their Covenant in Such a Way, and then he with Others would have Comunion wth them. Mr Dupper would have them therein to Detest and Protest against ye Parish churches, Some ware Unwilling in their Covenanting either to be tyed either to protest against ye truth of them, or to affirm it of them, not knowing wt in time to come God might further manifest to them thereabout Yet for peace Sake all Yelded to renew their Covenant in these Words "To Walke togeather in all ye Ways of God So farr as he hath made known to Us, or shall make known to us, & to forsake all false Ways, & to this the several Members Subscribed their hands"

A very interesting covenant document is preserved in the British Museum collection of Boswell Papers.[2] It consists of the "Articles or Couenant offered by Mr Hu : Peters Minister, to the English Congregation at Rtterdam, to his Congregon : before admission into it or to the Lord's supper to be subscribed &c : 1633."

The 15 Artickells and Couenant of Mr Hugh Peter of Rott

1	To	Be Contented wth meet triall for our Wittness to be members : . .
2	To	Cleaue in hart to the truth and pure worship

[1] Word or words omitted in the Gould copy.

[2] "Boswell Papers, Additional MS.," 6394. Vol. I., p. 161.

		of God and to oppose all wayes of Innouation and Corruption.
3	To	Suffer the word to be the guider of all Controuersies.
4	To	Labor for growth of knowledge and to that end to Confer, pray, heare, and meditate: . .
5	To	Submitte to brotherly admonision and Censure wth out enuie or anger. . .
6	To	Be throughly reconciled one to a nother euen in Indytment be fore wee begin this work. .
7	To	Walk in all kind of exactness both in regard of our selues, and others. . .
8	To	Forbear Clogging our selues and harts wth earthly Cares wch is the bayn of religion.
9	To	Labor to gett A great measuer of humillitie and meeknes and to bannish pride and highnes of spirit. . .
10	To	Meditate the furthering of the gosspell at home and A broad as well in our perssons as wth our pursses. . .
11	To	Take nearly to hart our bretherens Condition and to Conforme our selues to theyr troble same tymes both in dyet and apparrell that thay be wth out excesse in nessesitie. . .
12	To	Deall wth all kynde of wissdome and gentellnes towards those that are wth out. . .
13	To	Studie Amitie and brotherly loue. . .
14	To	Put one and other in mynd of this *Couenant* and as occassion is offered to take an Acomte of what is done in the premisses. . .
15	To	And for the furthering of the Kingdome of C[h]rist: dilligently to instruckt Chilldren & seruants, yea and to look to our wayes and accomtes dayley: Finis [1]

[1] A letter of "Alex Browne" ("Boswell Papers, Additional MS." 6394, Vol. I., p. 153) sent with this covenant, dated November 1, 1633, says: "I have heir sent you Mr Peters Couenant wch he maide and vnless wee will all subscribe to this his Couenant wee shall not be admitted to the lords Table neither ould members nor none: so that it semes to me our Church formerly was noe Church: but what authoritie he haith to

This document is of special interest, inasmuch as Mr. Peter was pastor of a Puritan church at Rotterdam, and was also one of the earliest members of the "Massachusetts Company" in 1628. He is supposed to have been a friend of Endicott, and was one of those Puritans that must have known Rev. John White, who apparently somewhat favored Plymouth church views. Whether Mr. Peter accepted the covenant idea through the contact of Endicott and other friends with the Plymouth colonists is uncertain but possible, for apparently he did not use a covenant in his church till 1633. But he might also have accepted the idea from the Independent churches in Holland. Whether he adopted the Separatist polity from the one or the other, however,

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doe these thinges: I know not: for he him sellf saith the C[h]urch of Eingland doth tye the Concienc of men to do this and that, and he for his parte in this his Couenant ties both Concienc. and. . ." Judging from this quotation, Alexander Browne evidently had once been a member of Mr. Peter's church, and with others had been considerably aggravated by this sudden assumption of authority on the part of the pastor. The blame is clearly laid on Mr. Peter and on no other. Certainly he could have made no covenant in this church before 1633, and probably no other pastors of this church had made any, for the authority by which he now imposes this covenant is not known.

It is, therefore, difficult to agree with Prof. Williston Walker's statements, that "Rev. Hugh Peter, . . employed a covenant in the church at Rotterdam of which he became colleague pastor on his flight from England in 1629," and that "probably Peter's own adoption of the covenant was due to the influence of his associate in the Rotterdam charge, Dr. William Ames, whose Separatist leanings were decided." ("Hist. of the Congreg. Churches," p. 102.)

Further, the correctness of the following statement ("Creeds and Platforms," p. 96) may be questioned, that "One [of the covenants preserved by William Rathband] is that adopted by the church in Rotterdam, Holland, when Peter became its pastor." [From note, "In 1629."] The covenant of 1633 seems to be the first used by him, and the covenant preserved by Rathband is probably a renewed and later covenant of the Rotterdam church, *i. e.*, of a date between 1633 and 1635.

The ordination of Mr. Peter, in which this covenant was used, is described in a letter contained in the "Boswell Papers, Additional MS." 6394, Vol. I., p. 146, as follows:

"Concerning Mr Peters ordination

"1 There was a New Covenant made wch contains [word or words illegible] & strict obligaons to wch they should bind themselves. and he would be chosen by none but them that would put there hands to that papr. This saith Mr Paget was a kind of Excommunicaõn to alow [?] two [?] pts [?] of the congregaõn in former times. & hath caused the difficulty of administering the sacrament because he will give it to none but them whose names are at his New Covenant. Those New Covenanted must choose to Call him, So before that a Sermon was made by Mr Forbes."

it may safely be said that he was, at least, one of the earliest Englishmen to develop the church covenant into a written document with numbered, specific divisions. His influence on the drawing up of later covenants seems to have been considerable.

Before Mr. Peter came to America in 1635 evidently he renewed or modified the covenant of 1633 to read as follows:

The Covenant of the English Church at Roterdame.[1]

We whose names are here-under written, having a long time found by sad experience how uncomfortable it is to walk in a disordered and unsettled condition, &c. 1. Doe renue our Covenant in Baptisme, and avouch God to be our God. 2. We resolve to cleave to the true and pure worship of God, opposing to our power all false wayes. 3. We will not allow our selves in any known sin, but will renounce it, so soon as it is manifested from Gods Word so to be: the Lord lending us power. 4. We resolve to carry our selves in our severall places of government and obedience with all good conscience, knewing we must give an account to God. 5. We will labour for further growth in grace, by hearing, reading, prayer, meditation, and all other wayes we can. 6. We meane not to over-burthen our hearts with earthly cares, which are the bane of all holy duties, the breach of the Sabbath, and the other Commandments. 7. We will willingly and meekly submit to Christian Discipline, without murmuring, and shall labour so to continue, and will endevour to be more forward, zealous, faithfull, loving and wise in admonishing others. 8. We will labour

[1] Text from "A Briefe Narration of Some Church Courses," etc., by William Rathband. London, 1644. Pp. 17, 18. Rathband states concerning this covenant that it is "*The Covenant of the* English *Church at* Roterdame (*as is reported to us*) *renewed when Mr H. P. was made their Pastour*," which we have seen cannot well be correct.

by all our abilities for the furtherance of the Gospell as occasion shall be offered to us. 9. We promise to have our children, servants, and all our charge taught the wayes of God. 10. We will strive to give no offence to our brethren by censuring them rashly by suspitions, evill speakings, or any other way. 11. Lastly, we doe protest not onely against open and scandalous sins, as drunkennesse, swearing, &c., but also against evill companie, and all appearance of evill to the utmost of our power.

Per me H. P.

In 1633 the first Particular, or Calvinistic, Baptist Church in England was formed. Did this new church employ a covenant? In all probability, for a number, at least, of its members had peacefully been dismissed from one of the covenant churches, notably Mr. Jacob's. The only testimony to be had on this point is to be found in the well-known Gould manuscript, previously mentioned, containing among others the Jessey Records and the so-called Kiffin Manuscript.

What then, is the testimony of these two documents? The Jessey Records read :[1]

There haveing been much discussing these denying Truth of y^e^ Parish Churches, & y^e^ Church being now become so large y^t^ it might be prejudicial, these following desired dismission that they might become an Entire Church, & further y^e^ Comunion of those Churches in Order amongst themselves, w^ch^ at last was granted to them & performed Sep^t^ 12. 1633 etc.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

To These Ioyned Rich Blunt, etc.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Others joyned to them.

[1] Pp. 8, 9.

The Kiffin Manuscript, under the date 1633, says merely :

Sundry of y^e^ Church whereof M^r^ Iacob & M^r^ Iohn Lathorp had been pastors, being dissatisfyed w^th^ y^e^ Churches owning of English Parishes to be true Churches desired dismission & Ioyned togeather among themselves, as M^r^ Henry Parker, etc.

We have no further information on the matter, but from what we have we may judge that an implicit or informal covenant is probably indicated by the words "Ioyned togeather among themselves," and that a covenant should have been used is more than natural, since, as has been said, those who formed the new church had peacefully been dismissed from the older congregation, and probably knew no more satisfactory way of forming a church ; for Calvinistic Baptists and Arminian Baptists, doubtless, had little to do with each other in their earlier history. Further, it will be seen later that, in 1652 at any rate, John Spilsbury, pastor of this new church from 1638, or even earlier, certainly held to the view that a church covenant was of value in church organization.

As no English covenants later than those given above, till 1640, seem to have been preserved, we may profitably turn to the earliest covenants made in New England, which can well be termed the Covenant Land. Hither had come many of those Englishmen who were most interested in religious freedom. The Pilgrim Fathers among these had, on their arrival, by covenant formed a state, whose inhabitants soon became leading factors in the propagation of Congregational views. What then, is the early development of the covenant idea in America ?

First, we may properly mention the covenant by which the colonists on the "Mayflower" created a State, a new departure in the use of the covenant idea. This document, as given by Bradford, at the beginning of "The 2 Booke," reads :

The forme was as followeth.

In y^e^ name of god Amen. We whose names are vnderwritten, the loyall subjects of our dread soueraigne Lord King James, by y^e^ grace of god, of great Britaine, Franc, & Ireland king, defender of y^e^ faith, &c.

Haueing vndertaken, for y^e^ glorie of god, and aduancement of y^e^ christian faith and honour of our king & countrie, a voyage to plant y^e^ first colonie in y^e^ Northerne parts of Virginia. doe by these presents solemnly & mutualy in y^e^ presence of god, and one of another, couenant, & combine our selues togeather into a ciuill body politick ; for our better ordering, & preseruation & furtherance of y^e^ ends aforesaid ; and by vertue hearof to enacte, constitute, and frame such just & equall lawes, ordinances, Acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete & conuenient for y^e^ generall good of y^e^ Colonie : unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witnes wherof we haue herevnder subscribed our names at Cap-Codd y^e^ 11. of Nouember, in y^e^ year of y^e^ raigne of our soueraigne lord king James of England, France, & Ireland y^e^ eighteenth and of Scotland y^e^ fiftie fourth. An^o^ : Dom. 1620.[1]

After the arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth in 1620, they seem still to have considered themselves members of the Leyden Church, or at least a branch of it, for no new church organization seems to have been

[1] Text from photograph copy of the original, found in "Bradford's History 'Of Plimoth Plantation.' From the Original Manuscript." Boston, 1898. P. 110 plus.

effected, nor was any new covenant formula drawn up till 1676, when, during times of trouble, a new covenant document was read to the assembled church; but this it seems was looked upon only as a renewal of the old covenant, for "the church voted that it should be left upon record as that which they did own to be the substance of that Covenant which their Fathers enterred into at the first gathering of the church."

This renewed Mayflower Church covenant of 1676 with the account of the conditions under which it was used, contained in the records of the Plymouth First Church, will be given later in chronological order.

In 1628 the first successful company of Puritan settlers arrived on American soil, and founded the colony of Massachusetts Bay. The organizer of this settlement was Rev. John White, rector of a Puritan church in Dorchester, England. It is probable that for some time before the colonists left England he and other Puritans, through the conscious or unconscious influence of the Independents, had been moving toward Separatist principles. At any rate, certain it is that shortly after their arrival in America the settlers had adopted in part, at least, hitherto despised Congregational, or Independent views; for when in 1629 they formed the Salem Church, the first Puritan church in America, they organized it by use of a church covenant. Furthermore, the company settling Dorchester in 1630 was formed into a church estate through Rev. John White's influence, even before it left the shores of England. We are, therefore, not surprised to find that the Puritan churches founded at Charlestown-Boston, and Watertown in the same year also employed church covenants, though

that of the Dorchester church unfortunately has not been preserved.

It is concerning the early Puritan churches, doubtless, that Edward Winslow, in describing the way in which the Massachusetts men, in some things, copied after the Plymouth way [*Hypocrisie Unmasked*, etc. (1646), 92], says: "Which being by them well weighed and considered, they also entred into Covenant with God, and one with another *to walke in all his wayes revealed, or as they should bee made knowne unto them, and to worship him according to his will revealed in his written word onely*," [1] etc.

The covenant of the Salem church used at its formation in 1629 and renewed in 1636, and the Charlestown-Boston and Watertown covenants of 1630 read as follows:

The Salem Covenant of 1629.

We Covenant with the Lord and one with another; and doe bynd ourselves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth.[2]

By this simple covenant, as Prof. Williston Walker has clearly shown,[3] the first church in the colony of Massachusetts was organized. The long covenant, quoted in Mather's "Magnalia," 1702, Vol. I., p. 18, as that made in 1629, is really the renewed covenant of 1636, as Professor Walker has indubitably proved by use of

[1] See Dr. H. M. Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 378. Note 64.

[2] White's text of the copy in the Salem church book of 1660, 1661. Cited in Prof. Williston Walker's "Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism." New York. 1893. P. 116.

[3] By giving White's text of the covenant of 1636. See pp. 116–118.

White's text of the copy in the church book of 1660, 1661.[1] Mather's copy is, in fact, imperfect.

In 1636 Rev. Hugh Peter, formerly of Rotterdam, who had there employed the long covenants previously cited, became pastor of the Salem church, and at once on, or very soon after, beginning his pastoral duties, enlarged the original covenant by nine specific articles, thereby following the general style of the Rotterdam church covenants.

The Renewed Salem Covenant of 1636.[2]

Gather my Saints together unto me that have made a Covenant with me by sacrifyce. Ps. 50 : 5.

Wee whose names are here under written, members of the present Church of Christ in Salem, having found by sad experience how dangerous it is to sitt loose to the Covenant wee make with our God : and how apt wee are to wander into by pathes, even to the looseing of our first aimes in entring into Church fellowship : Doe therefore solemnly in the presence of the Eternall God, both for our own comforts, and those which shall or maye be joyned unto us, renewe that Church Covenant we find this Church bound unto at theire first beginning, viz : That We Covenant with the Lord and one with an other ; and doe bynd our selves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth. And doe more explicitely in the name and feare of God, profess and protest to walke as followeth through the power and grace of our Lord Jesus.

1 first wee avowe the Lord to be our God, and our selves his people in the truth and simplicitie of our spirits.

2 We give our selves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word of his grace, fore the teaching, ruleing and

[1] "Creeds and Platforms," pp. 116–118. [2] *Ibid.*

sanctifyeing of us in matters of worship, and Conversation, resolveing to cleave to him alone for life and glorie ; and oppose all contrarie wayes, canons and constitutions of men in his worship.

3 Wee promise to walke with our brethren and sisters in this Congregation with all watchfullnes and tendernes, avoyding all jelousies, suspitions, backbyteings, censurings, provoakings, secrete risings of spirite against them ; but in all offences to follow the rule of the Lord Jesus, and to beare and forbeare, give and forgive as he hath taught us.

4 In publick or in private, we will willingly doe nothing to the ofence of the Church but will be willing to take advise for our selves and ours as occasion shalbe presented.

5 Wee will not in the Congregation be forward eyther to shew oure owne gifts or parts in speaking or scrupling, or there discover the fayling of oure brethren or sisters butt atend an orderly cale there unto ; knowing how much the Lord may be dishonoured, and his Gospell in the profession of it, sleighted, by our distempers, and weaknesses in publyck.

6 Wee bynd our selves to studdy the advancement of the Gospell in all truth and peace, both in regard of those that are within, or without, noe way sleighting our sister Churches, but useing theire Counsell as need shalbe : nor laying a stumbling block before any, noe not the Indians, whose good we desire to promote, and soe to converse, as we may avoyd the verrye appearance of evill.

7 We hearbye promise to carrye our selves in all lawfull obedience, to those that are over us, in Church or Commonweale, knowing how well pleasing it will be to the Lord, that they should have incouragement in theire places, by our not greiveing theyre spirites through our Irregularities.

8 Wee resolve to approve our selves to the Lord in our perticular calings, shunning ydleness as the bane of

any state, nor will wee deale hardly, or oppressingly with any, wherein we are the Lord's stewards :

9 alsoe promyseing to our best abilitie to teach our children and servants, the knowledg of God and his will, that they may serve him also ; and all this, not by any strength of our owne, but by the Lord Christ, whose bloud we desire may sprinckle this our Covenant made in his name.

The Charlestown-Boston Covenant[1] of July 30, 1630

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, & in Obedience to His holy will & Divine Ordinaunce.

Wee whose names are herevnder written, being by His most wise, & good Providence brought together into this part of America in the Bay of Massachusetts, & desirous to vnite our selves into one Congregation, or Church, vnder the Lord Jesus Christ our Head, in such sort as becometh all those whom He hath Redeemed, & Sanctifyed to Himselfe, do hereby solemnly, and religiously (as in His most holy Proesence) Promisse, & bind ou^rselves, to walke in all our wayes according to the Rule of the Gospell, & in all sincere Conformity to His holy Ordinaunces, & in mutuall love, & respect each to other, so neere as God shall give vs grace.

Concerning events connected with the preparation of this covenant, Professor Walker says :[2]

The sickness incident to new settlements in those days of little sanitary knowledge afflicted Winthrop's company at Charlestown severely. In their distress Winthrop appealed to the Salem church for advice. At Salem there were present, on the reception of this request, three of the more prominent members of the

[1] Text from A. B. Ellis's "History of the First Church in Boston," p. 3. Cited by Prof. Williston Walker in his "Creeds and Platforms," p. 131.

[2] "History of the Congregational Churches in the United States." New York, 1894, p. 112.

Plymouth body, Fuller, Winslow, and Allerton. . . By the joint counsel of the Salem church and of the representatives of that of Plymouth, Friday, July 30, 1630, was appointed as a fast in view of the sickness, and by the same advice covenanted churches were organized on that day at Charlestown and Watertown. At Charlestown such care was exercised in admission to this new fellowship, that on the day of beginning only four, Governor Winthrop, Isaac Johnson, Thomas Dudley, and Rev. John Wilson were united—a number which was rapidly augmented during the ensuing weeks.

The Watertown Covenant of July 30, 1630[1]

July 30, 1630

We whose Names are hereto subscribed, having through God's Mercy escaped out of *Pollutions* of the World, and been taken into the *Society* of his People, with all Thankfulness do hereby both with *Heart* and *Hand* acknowledge, *That* his Gracious Goodness, and Fatherly Care, towards us: And for further and more full Declaration thereof, to the present and future Ages, have undertaken (for the promoting of his *Glory* and the Churches *Good*, and the Honour of our Blessed *Jesus*, in our more full and free subjecting of our selves and ours, under his Gracious *Government*, in the Practice of, and Obedience unto all his Holy Ordinances and Orders, which he hath pleased to prescribe and impose upon us) a long and hazardous Voyage from *East* to *West*, from *Old England* in *Europe*, to *New-England* in *America*; that we may walk before him, and serve *him, without Fear in Holiness and Righteousness, all the Days of our Lives*: And being safely arrived here, and thus far onwards peaceably preserved by his special *Providence*, that we may bring forth our Intentions into *Actions*, and perfect our *Resolutions*, in the Beginnings of some Just and Meet *Executions*; We have *separated* the *Day* above written from all other Services, and *Dedicated* it

[1] Text from Cotton Mather's "Magnalia," London, 1702, Bk. III., p. 83.

wholly to the Lord in Divine Employments, for a Day of *Afflicting our Souls*, and humbling our selves before the Lord, to seek *him*, and at his Hands, a Way to walk in, by *Fasting* and *Prayer*, that we *might know what was Good in his Sight:* And the Lord was intreated of us.

For in the End of that Day, after the finishing of our publick Duties, we do all, before we depart, solemnly and with all our Hearts, *personally*, Man by Man for our selves and ours (charging *them* before Christ and his Elect Angels, even *them* that are not here with us this Day, or are yet unborn, That they keep the Promise unblameably and faithfully unto the coming of our Lord Jesus) promise, and *enter into a sure Covenant* with the Lord our God, and before him with one another, by *Oath* and serious Protestation made, to Renounce all *Idol*atry and *Superstition*, Will-Worship, all Humane *Traditions* and *Inventions* whatsoever, in the Worship of God; and forsaking all *Evil Ways*, do give ourselves wholly unto the Lord Jesus, to do him faithful Service, observing and keeping all his Statutes, Commands, and Ordinances, in all Matters concerning our *Reformation;* his Worship, Administrations, Ministry, and Government; and in the Carriage of our selves among our selves, and one towards another, as he hath prescribed in his Holy *Word*. Further swearing to cleave unto *that* alone, and the true Sense and meaning thereof to the utmost of our Power, as unto the most clear *Light* and infallible *Rule*, and All-sufficient *Canon*, in all things that concern us in this our Way. In Witness of all, we do *ex Animo*, and in the presence of God, hereto set our *Names*, or *Marks*, in the Day and Year above written.

By 1639 the covenant idea had become so popular in the minds of the Massachusetts and New Haven colonists, that even towns were organized by covenant. This was the case at "Menunkatuck, afterwards Guilford," founded in that year. The Guilford covenant was made

on shipboard, before the colonists reached this country, and reads as follows :[1]

June 1. Individuals who, the next September, purchase Menunkatuck, afterwards Guilford, enter into the following covenant: "We whose names are hereunder written, intending by God's gracious permission to plant ourselves in New England, and, if it may be, in the southerly part about Quinnipiack, we do faithfully promise each to each, for ourselves and our families, and those that belong to us, that we will, the Lord assisting us, sit down and join ourselves together in one entire plantation, and to be helpful each to the other in any common work, according to every man's ability, and as need shall require ; . . As for our gathering together in a church way, and the choice of officers and members to be joined together in that way, we do refer ourselves until such time as it shall please God to settle us in our plantation.

This was signed by Henry Whitfield and twenty-four others. In fact the church was the dominant force in these colonial settlements from the first, but her power was greatly enlarged when, in 1631, the Massachusetts general court prescribed that the franchise should be limited to church-members. In the New Haven colony also the same law prevailed, so that in these two settlements at least, joining in covenant became quite necessary if one desired much influence. In the Plymouth and Connecticut colonies the franchise was not thus restricted.

The two earliest Baptist churches in this country were organized before 1640, namely, the First Church in

[1] Text given by Rev. J. B. Felt, LL. D., in his "Ecclesiastical History of New England." Boston, 1855. Vol. I., pp. 406, 407.

Providence, R. I., formed in 1638, and the church in Newport, R. I., founded not long after. The Providence church, however, never adopted a covenant, and the records of the Newport church in the early days were in the hands of the pastors, and have but partially been preserved, so that its original church covenant, if indeed there was one, is no longer known.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LITERARY DISCUSSION CONCERNING THE CHURCH COVENANT IDEA

WE have now seen that in the colonies, notably of Massachusetts Bay and New Haven, the covenant idea had grown into a prominence unequaled elsewhere, and that even the American Puritans before 1640 had adopted it as the most satisfactory method of organizing their churches, and even their settlements. That the prominence given to this idea should long remain unnoticed by English Puritans could not be expected. In those years, it would seem, the future of the church covenant depended largely on American influence, for while there were Independents in England who used the covenant, yet their number was comparatively insignificant. The Baptists seem for the time to have rejected it, or at least to have given it a minor position, and from Holland the best Independents in general had emigrated to America. Among the English Puritans as a whole, and to a large extent in general among English Dissenters, excepting of course the Independents, the church covenant never was popular, and it is, therefore, but natural that a discussion of considerable length developed concerning it. Yet after 1640 it is certain that, even in England, the church covenant became thereby not only better known, but more ex-

tensively used, and, doubtless, the rapid increase in the number of English Independent churches was due, at least in some measure, to the influx of Puritans.

It has already been shown that literature indirectly discussing the church covenant had begun to appear as early as 1588. As the years passed, the number of those dissatisfied with the term increased, for men were seeking to discover the New Testament mode of forming Christian churches, and many could find no warrant for Robert Browne's conception of the New Covenant. The English Baptists before 1640 called the New Covenant a "Covenant of Life and Salvation," but they did not understand that the Apostles ever made use of a church covenant such as Browne had used in the formation of his church in Norwich.

It must be remembered, however, that the discussion now to be considered was carried on chiefly between American and English Puritans. Presbyterians, also, frequently joined in it, but in general English Baptists do not appear to have participated to any great extent, if at all.

The English Puritans had been leaning more and more toward such a Presbyterianism as Cartwright had advocated, and no doubt it was the cause of some consternation to them to find their New England brethren thus turning in another direction. It is certainly probable that the English in general would never have been so stirred by the question of the true apostolic church polity if the comparatively insignificant congregations of Separatists in England had been the only source of dissent to fear. Now, however, an entirely new aspect had been given to the danger which might threaten the Estab-

lished Church, and the Presbyterian Church, for Independency or Congregationalism had now itself become a State Church, and, not content with so much success, was endeavoring with energy to gain a foothold in England. The English government would naturally have attempted to put down such an upstart movement, but two historic events probably prevented: first, the signing by Parliament of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643, in the closing words of which "encouragement" is besought of God "to other christian Churches groaninge vnder, or in danger of the yoke of Anti-christian tyranny to Joyne in the same, or like assocācōn and couenant to the glory of God the enlargement of the Kingdome of Jesus Christ," etc.; secondly, the rise of Cromwell and the army to controlling power in England.

The great question of course, in this discussion was, What is the true method of organizing a gospel church? Now, in the Congregational polity the covenant was fundamental, and hence in this discussion there was much criticism concerning it.

As early as 1634 John Cotton's "Questions and Answers upon Church Government" was written and possibly it was circulating in the Mother Country even before it was printed. Soon other works appeared, many of them bearing directly or indirectly on the church covenant idea. In 1638, for instance, after the renewal of the National Covenant of Scotland, two works appeared, evidently to answer certain objections of scrupulous Scotchmen. These were followed in 1639 by J. Hall's "Certaine irrefragable propositions concerning oaths and church government, worthy serious consideration," etc., which may have had some effect in

dampening the desire of Puritans in England to use covenants in organizing their churches, for in the preface of "A | DEFENCE OF THE | Answer made unto the Nine *Questions* | or *Positions* sent from *New-England*, | Against the | REPLY THERETO | BY | That Reverend servant of Christ, | Mr. John Ball; | . . . 1645," it is said,[1] it had been claimed against the American Puritans:

> *Secondly, that we* [the American Puritans] *make a vocall Church Oath or Covenant, the essentiall forme of a Church, where as . . . it is far from our practise to use any Oath in our Covenant, and strange to us to read so many Pages against our Church Oath, and swearing to a Covenant, to make our courses horrid and too rigorous.*

In 1641 pamphlets and books discussing the question of church government from the point of view of the Congregationalist, of the Puritan, and of the Presbyterian began to become so numerous in the book market that "An Extract of a Letter written from a Minis | ter in *New England*, to a Member of the | Assembly of Divines," printed in 1646 in Thomas Edwards' "The Second Part | of | GANGRÆNA" says:[2] "Discipline, or Church Government is now the great businesse of the Christian World." The main discussion between English and American writers may perhaps be said to have lasted about fifteen or twenty years, and gradually developed in America into the Half-Way Covenant Controversy, which continued to agitate the minds of American Congregationalists for a century and a half.

We may now inquire, What of all the early works that refer to the church covenant are specially worthy of

[1] P. 13. [2] P. 166.

our notice, what were the ideas advanced, and what influence did the discussion have on the practice of the churches in regard to the covenant?

One of the most important books for our consideration is, doubtless, "A Letter of Many Ministers in Old England, Requesting the Judgement of their Reverend Brethren in *New England* concerning Nine Positions Written Anno Dom. 1637," published at London, July 30, 1643. The following quotations from this will give us a clear idea of the nature of the English Puritans' objections to the church covenant:

That Church Covenant which is necessary was not in use in the Apostles times, but the Covenant they entred into bound no man to this condition for ought we reade. They did not prescribe it, no church ever yet covenanted it as necessary to the preservation of the body.[1]

And here we intreat leave to put you in minde of that which you have considered already, schil. That the Church and every member thereof hath entred into Covenant, either expresly or implicitely to take God for their God, and to keepe the words of the Covenant and doe them, to seeke the Lord with all their hearts, and to walke before him in truth and uprightnesse: but we never finde that they were called to give account of the worke of grace wrought in their soules, or that the whole Congregation were appointed to be Judge thereof.[2]

The second thing you affirm is, that not only the covenant of grace which is common to all beleevers; but Church-Covenant also which is peculiar to confederates is necessarie to the participation of the Seales.[3]

Having quoted Acts 10 : 43–48, those writing this "Letter" say: "but there is not a word of Church-Covenant, either in the Institution or administration of

[1] P. 79. [2] P. 81, incorrectly numbered 73. [3] P. 68.

the Seales before they [those converted by the Apostles] were admitted to them." [1]

In "An Apologie | of the Churches | in New-England | for Church-Covenant. | or, | A Discourse touching the Covenant | between God and men, and especially concerning Church-Covenant, that is to say, The | Covenant which a Company doe enter into when | they become a Church; and which a parti- | *cular person enters into when he becomes a member of a Church.*" "Sent over in Answer to Master Bernard, | in the yeare 1639," printed in London in 1643, are further extended and clear statements of the views of both the English and the American Puritans. In this book, perhaps, we find the first direct testimony to the influence of the Scotch Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 on the Congregationalists, for evidently no sooner had Mr. Richard Mather,[2] the writer of the above work, in New England, seen the clause of encouragement to other

[1] P. 69.

[2] Mr. Richard Mather is shown to be the author of this "Apologie" by the following statement from the preface "To the READER" of a work entitled "A | DISPUTATION | CONCERNING | Church-Members | AND THEIR | CHILDREN, | IN | ANSWER | TO | XXI. QUESTIONS: | Now Published by a Lover of Truth | *London,* 1659," in which the statement occurs: "*perhaps the Reader may have been deceived in some other Treatises, which have gone abroad, and generally been look't upon, as the compilement of the* Elders *in* New-England; *whereas they had but one private person for their Author. So it is indeed in the* 32 Questions, *the Answerer whereof was* Mr. Richard Mather, *and not any other Elder or Elders in* New-England, *who likewise is the Author of the* discourse concerning Church-Covenant *printed therewith, which latter he wrote for his private use in his own study, never intending, nor indeed consenting to its publication, nor so much as knowing unto this day how the copy of it came abroad into those hands by whom it is made publick, save that he conjectures some procured a copy of it from* Mr. Cotton, *to whom (such was their intimacy in his life time) he communicated it, as he writes in a late Letter to a son of his now in* England *who it seems had enquired of him concerning those Treatises; and much lesse is there any truth in that which is said in the Title page prefixed to the* Discourse of Church-Covenant, *as if it were sent over to* Mr. Barnard Anno 1639; Mr. Mather *having neither acquaintance nor any intercourse by Letters with* Mr. Barnard." (Prof. Williston Walker's "Creeds and Platforms," p. 289.)

Christian churches "to Joyne in the same, or like assocācōn and couenant," than he published the following defense of the New England method of organizing churches :

By entring into Covenant with God, a people come to be the Lords people, that is to say, his Church.

2. If it was of all the people together, the reason was because that Church was a nationall Church : now if a nationall Church becomes a Church by entring into solemne Covenant with God then a Congregationall Church becomes a Church by the same means.[1]

In speaking of the Covenant of the Jewish people a passage is quoted to the effect that

this Covenant was of the whole Church with God and therefore not like our Church-Covenants, which are between the Church and the members, concerning watchfulnesse over one another, and the like.[2]

But this place of Deut. 29 *is not sufficient to prove a Church-Covenant in these days : because it is in the Scriptures of the old Testament, for whatsoever must be used in the dayes of the old Testament, must not be proved from the Scriptures of the New Testament, or else it is to be layd aside.*[3]

2 But [says the writer of the "Apologie"] suppose there were not pregnant places for it [the church covenant] in the New Testament, yet it is not enough to prove the same unlawfull : for whatsoever Ordinance of the old Testament, is not repealed in the New Testament, as peculiar to the Jewish Paedagogie, but was of morall and perpetuall equitie, the same bindes us in these dayes, and is to be accounted the revealed will of God in all ages.[4]

Another Scripture to prove the same [the propriety of a church covenant], is *Deut.* 26. 16, 17, 18 with *Deut.* 29. 9. *This day the Lord hath* commanded *thee to doe these Statutes and Judgments, thou shalt therefore keepe and doe them, &c. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walke in his*

[1] Pp. 5, 6. [2] P. 7. [3] P. 8. [4] P. 8.

wayes, and to keep his Statutes, &c. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people; Take heed and harken, O Israel, this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God.[1]

Having spoken of the marriage of the Church to Christ, the author quotes the following objection of their opponents to the church covenant:

But this spirituall marriage is between Christ and the Church, But the Church-Covenant is between the Church and the members, and therefore this marriage doth not prove the Church-Covenant.[2]

To this answer is made:

But properly the marriage is between Christ & the Church, and so is the Covenant also, so farre as therein they give up themselves to Christ as unto an head and Lord; as a woman in the Covenant of marriage doth give up her selfe unto her husband; And the performance of such duties as the Church and the members owe one unto another, is a branch of the marriage-Covenant,[3] wherein they are tyed to Christ; for Christ himselfe in his Covenant requires, not only that they should give up themselves to him, but also that they should performe these duties one unto another.[4] It is not habitation in the same Towne that distinguisheth Churches, and Church-members from other men, but their mutuall agreement and combination and joyning themselves together in an holy Covenant with God.[5]

The author quotes also the following objections to the church covenant idea:

But joyning doth not alway signifie joyning in Covenant; Philip joined to the Eunnuchs chariote, and dust to mens feete, Act. 8.

[1] P. 9. [2] P. 11.

[3] It seems possible that this view of the church covenant as a Marriage Covenant may have been taken from the views of Melchior Hofmann the Anabaptist, and his followers. It will be remembered that this was his favorite original idea.

[4] P. 12. [5] P. 14.

29. & Luke 10, 11. *and yet there was no Covenant, and therefore men may joyne to the Church without any Covenant.*[1]

Church Covenant is a Terme that is not found in Scripture. To this answer is made "So is Sacrament, Trinitie, &c."[2]

But this Church-Covenant puts some disparagement upon the Covenant of Grace, which every beleever is already entered into with God, and seems to charge the same with iusufficiency; for every second Covenant doth argue that the first was not faultlesse, Heb. 8. 7.[3]

But the Scripture, Act. 2. 41. *tels of joyning to the Church without any Covenant, For it was not possible that 3000 should enter into covenant in one day.*[4]

But why is there so little proofe of this Church-Covenant in the New Testament.[5]

To this last the following answer is given:

The Apostles do sufficiently testifie, that such a thing was practised in their dayes, else how should we understand that fellowship in the Gospel in its full latitude and breadth, Phil. 1. 5. if this combining into Church-fellowship be no part thereof.[6]

The signing of the Scotch Solemn League and Covenant in 1643, doubtless influenced the writer of the above work, and no doubt led to the writing and publishing of "The Saints' Solemn Covenant with their God," by John Brinsley, London, 1644, in which he says:[7]

Such a Covenant had the people of the Iews entred and made with their God, a *Covenant,* and a *Solemne* Covenant. *And such a Covenant must all the Lords People enter with their God, all that would be owned and acknowledged of God as his People, as his Saints, they must strike Covenant,* and *a Solemne Covenant with their God.* Upon these two I shall insist severally, briefly by way of *Explication,* putting them together in the *Application.*

[1] P. 21. [2] P. 25. [3] P. 25. [4] P. 28.
[5] P. 30. [6] P. 31. [7] P. 6.

In 1648 appeared Thomas Hooker's work, entitled "A | Survey | of the Summe of | Church-Discipline. | Wherein, | The Way of the Churches of | New-England | is warranted out of the Word." This contains the following valuable statements in regard to the church covenant:

That then which gives the *formality* of these Churches we are now to inquire: and the conclusion we maintain is this, *Mutual covenanting and confoederating of the Saints in the fellowship of the faith according to the order of* the Gospel is that which gives constitution and being to a visible church.[1]

2. *How the Covenant may be expressed.* This Covenant is dispensed or acted after a double manner.

Either *Explicitely* or Implicitely.

An *Explicite* Covenant is, when there is an *open expression* and *profession* of this ingagement in the face of the Assembly, which persons by mutuall consent undertake in the waies of Christ. An *Implicite* Covenant is, when in their practice they *do that*, whereby they *make* themselves *ingaged* to walk in such a society, according to such rules of government, which are exercised amongst them, and so submit themselves thereunto: but doe *not* make any *verball* profession thereof.[2]

Quest. If it be here inquired: *How far the covenant is of necessity required?*

Ans. According to foregoing expressions, the *answer* may be cast into these *conclusions* following.

1. An *Implicite* Covenant preserves the true *nature* of the *true* Church, because it carries the *formalis ratio* of a confoederation in it, by which a *Church* is *constituted.* For *Implicite* and *Explicite* are but adjuncts, and these separable from the *essence.* And therefore *the essence and being of the covenant may consist with* either.

2. In *some cases* an Implicite covenant may be fully *sufficient.*

[1] Pp. 45, 46. [2] P. 47.

As, suppose a whole congregation should consist of such, who were children to the parents now deceased, who were confoederate: Their *children* were true members according to the rules of the Gospel, by the profession of their fathers covenant, though they should not make any *personall* and *vocall* expression of their ingagement, as the fathers did.

3. Its most according to the *compleatnesse* of the rule, and for the better being of the Church, *that there be an explicite Covenant.* For

1. Thereby the *judgement* of the members comes to be informed and convinced of their *duty* more fully.
2. They are thereby *kept* from cavilling and starting aside from the *tenure* and *terms* of the covenant, which they have professed and acknowledged, before the Lord and so many witnesses.
3. Thereby their hearts stand under a stronger tye, and are *more* quickened and *provoked to doe that,* which they have before God and the congregation, *ingaged* themselves to doe.[1]

A work entitled "A | Consideration | of | Certaine Controversies | at this time agitated | In the | Kingdome of England, | Concerning the Government of the Church of God. | Written at the Command and appointment | of the Walachrian Classis, | By *Guilielmus Apollonii,* | Minister of the Word of God | at Middleburgh. | And sent from the Walachrian Churches, | to declare the sense and consent of | their Churches, to the | Synod at London. | Octob. 16. 1644," and printed in London in 1645, probably contains as sensible a view of the church covenant as can be found, and shows how widely the discussion had become known.

The following statements from this book are worthy of note:

[1] Pp. 48, 49.

Question.

VVHether a Church-Covenant solemnly made between the Members and the Governours of a Church publikely before the whole Church, whereby the members of a particular Church are by a publike and expresse agreement and promise associated and united amongst themselves, to exercise the feare and sacred worship of God, unity of faith, brotherly love, mutuall edification, and all duties of piety in a holy communion with God and amongst themselves; be absolutely necessary and essential to the constitution of a true church: so that without this Covenant there is no true or pure Church, nor true Church member.

Answer.

THe Reformed Churches judge it necessary to the constitution of a particular visible Church, that there be sacred union in the exercise of Ecclesiasticall communion, expressed by certaine externall acts appointed by God, and to be exercised in a visible Church society, under one ministry, and spirituall discipline. But this union, they affirme, the members of a true Church enter into amongst themselves, when they are united in one externall profession of the truth and holynesse, and in the same baptisme; and will frequent the same divine worship, be subject to the same Church Governors, be governed by the same law and jurisdiction Ecclesiasticall; and do submit themselves to the same discipline, and partake of the same Supper of the Lord. And in this union there is, they affirme, a kind of tacit and virtuall Covenant, which uniteth the faithfull into a particular Church: although such a solemne Covenant betweene them in expresse termes be not publikely entered into before the whole Church, as the question requireth.[1]

We deny therefore in this controversy:

1. That a solemne and expresse Church Covenant, between the Governors of a Church and the Members of it, publikely entered into before the whole Church, for the performance of all exercises of piety in a holy communion with God and amongst themselves, is absolutely necessary and essentiall to the constitution of a true visible Church, so that without such a Covenant there would be no visible Church of God, no member of a true or pure Church.

[1] Pp. 13, 14.

2. We deny allso, that by such a Church-Covenant that right is obtained which the members of a Church in Ecclesiasticall communion have to the Sacraments of grace, the privileges of the Ecclesiasticall Ministry and other benefits which Christ hath given to his Churches.

The reasons of our denial are these :

1. Because the Apostles have not ordained any such Church-Covenant betweene the Members and the Pastors of a Church ; neither in the admission of Members into the Church did require such a Covenant as necessary : but by the Sacrament of Baptisme they received such as professed the truth and holinesse into the Church visible.[1]

2. Under the Old Testament the particular Churches in the Synagogues entred not into any solemne Church Covenant in the admission of members : but only on extraordinary occasions, when they had made defection from God.[2]

3. No man can injoyne any thing upon the consciences of men, (as absolutely necessary to injoying the Sacraments of divine grace, and the benefits of the Ministery of the Church,) which God hath not injoyned ; without damnable wil-worship. But God hath not injoyned such a Covenant on the consciences of men as absolutely necessary : for there is no law of God wherein he hath injoyned a necessity of this Covenant as the essentiall form of Church-communion, so as that without it no man can be member of a visible Church, or have right to the seales of the Covenant : Therefore the necessity of this Covenant is a will-worship ; and so to be rejected.[3]

This Church-Covenant therefore is not the formall reason of our Ecclesiasticall communiõ in the Church visible. Hence allso our Churches of the Netherlands in admitting of Pastors or Church members do not enter into any such Church Covenant : which yet are true visible Churches of God.[4]

One point of great interest that this discussion brought out concerning the length and adequate expression of the covenant, we cannot afford to overlook. It has al-

[1] Pp. 27, 28. [2] P. 28. [3] Pp. 18, 19. [4] P. 19.

ready been seen that before 1640 two opposite tendencies were prominent in the drawing up of covenant documents, the one to make the covenant short and simple in thought and expression, the other to extend its content to particulars. During this discussion the question further came up as to whether an explicit covenant was really necessary to the formation of a Christian church. This appears to have been answered in the negative, so that after 1640 explicit and implicit[1] covenants perhaps generally were acknowledged sufficient. The latter seem at first to have appealed to various bodies of Baptists more than the former, for in the records of the formation of some Baptist churches no covenant is mentioned. Sometimes, however, the expressions used in describing the organization of certain

[1] That American Puritan churches during this period had decided that a Christian church could be properly formed without use of an explicit covenant is seen from the following: "*Wee frequently acknowledge that this Covenant which constituteth a Church, is either implicite or explicite, and that Congregations in England are truly Churches having an implicite covenant.*" ("A DEFENCE OF THE Answer made unto the Nine *Questions* or *Positions* sent from *New-England*," etc. 1645. Preface, p. 13).

Professor Walker, in speaking of the implicitness allowable in the formation of early American Congregational churches says: "the 'Cambridge Platform' asserted that a verbal covenant was not the only form of the basal agreement, for 'a company of faithful persons' express such a union 'by their constant practise in coming together for the publick worship of God, & by their religious subjection unto the ordinances of God.'" ("Hist. of the Congreg. Churches." Pp. 217, 218.)

The passage from which Professor Walker here quotes as given in "Creeds and Platforms," pp. 207, 208, reads in full as follows:

"4. This Voluntary *Agreement, Consent or Covenant* (for all these are here taken for the same): Although the more express and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in mind of our mutuall duty, & stirreth us up to it, & leaveth lesse room for the questioning of the Truth *of* the *Church-estate* of a Company of professors, & the Truth of membership of particular persons: [6] yet wee conceive, the substance of it is kept, where there is a real Agreement & consent, of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one Congregation, for the publick worship of God, & their mutuall edification: which real agreement & consent they doe express by their constant practise in comming together for their publick worship of God, & by their religious subjection unto the ordinances of God there: the rather, if wee doe consider how Scripture covenants have been entered into, not only expressly by word of mouth, but by sacrifice; by hand writing, & seal: & also sometimes by silent consent, without any writing, or expression of words at all."

churches, are in actuality those of a church covenant. Hence the substance of various Baptist church covenants is doubtless in reality written in the records of the respective churches, but with the word "covenant" omitted.

However, in the covenants even of those churches which granted that a covenant ought not to be merely implicit, various degrees of explicitness of expression are to be observed. But in general, from 1630 till 1700, covenant documents were brief and simple, though the somewhat extended explicit covenant gained the pre-eminence in the end. Among the earliest extended covenant documents are those of Watertown, 1630, and of Salem, 1636, in America; of Rotterdam, 1633, in Holland; and of Yarmouth, 1643, and Norwich, 1644, in England.

That during the period of the discussion there was a considerable difference of opinion as to the suitable explicitness of a church covenant may be seen from the following passages.

Robert Baillie, in writing concerning the covenant idea of the Independents or Congregationalists in 1645, says:

> Thus much for the matter of their Church: the form of it, not Accidental, but Essential and Constitutive, they place in an explicite Covenant, wherein, all and every one of the Members, by a voluntary Association, without the Authority of either Magistrate, or Minister, do binde themselves under a solemn Oath to walk in the wayes of the Gospel. . . The Association of these men, thus separate into a Covenant, is the essential form of their Church.[1]

Later in the same work[2] Baillie evidently quotes some American Puritan to the effect that

[1] In "A Dissvasive from the Errours of the Time." London, 1645, p. 23.

[2] Pp. 135, 136.

It [the church covenant] is no more with us then this, an assent and resolution professed by them that are to be admitted by us, with promise to walk in all these wayes pertaining to this Fellowship, so farre as they shall be revealed to them in the Gospel; thus briefly, indefinitely and implicitly, in such like words and no more or otherwise, do we apply our answers to mens consciences. Church-covenant, p. 36. We deny not, but the Covenant in many of the English Congregations is more implicite, and not so plaine as were to bee desired; yet therewants not that reall and substantiall coming together or agreeing in Covenant.

William Rathband also has preserved for us an early definition[1] of the church covenant that gives the following somewhat more complete statement of its proper content:

And thus they [the Independents, or Congregationalists] define it. Its a solemne and publicke Promise before the Lord and his people, whereby a companie of Christians called (by the power and mercie of God) to the fellowship of Christ, and (by his providence) to dwell together, and (by his Grace) to love and cleave together in the unitie of faith and brotherly love, and desirous to partake (according to the will of God) in all the holy Ordinances of God together in one Congregation, doe bind themselves to the Lord to walke in such wayes of holy worship to him, and of edification one towards another, as God himselfe hath required in his word of every Church of Christ and the members thereof.

The suitable content of an explicit church covenant perhaps is even more fully given in Thomas Lechford's "PLAIN DEALING | OR, | NEVVS | FROM | New England." London, 1642. He says:[2]

They [the American Congregationalists] solemnly enter into a Covenant with God, and one an other (which is called their Church

[1] In "A Brief Narration of Some Church Courses," etc. London, 1644, p. 15, 16.

[2] P. 2.

Covenant, and held by them to constitute a Church) to this effect : *viz.*

"To forsake the Devill, and all his workes, and the vanities of the sinfull world, and all their former lusts, and corruptions, they have lived and walked in, and to cleave unto, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, as their onely King and Lawgiver, their onely Priest and Prophet, and to walke together with that Church, in the unity of the faith, and brotherly love, and to submit themselves one unto an other, in all the ordinances of Christ, to mutuall edification, and comfort, to watch over, and support one another."

CHAPTER IX

BAPTIST VIEWS ON THE CHURCH COVENANT IN ENGLAND UNTIL 1700

WE have now some idea at least of the magnitude of this discussion, in which the church covenant played so prominent a part, and have learned of the views held by Congregationalists, Puritans, Presbyterians, in England, America, and Holland, concerning the covenant idea. What also did the English Baptists have to say in regard to it?

After the return to England, in 1612, of those who had become Baptists during their residence in Holland, their leaders apparently came to look with increasing disfavor on the use of church covenants. Still it is probable that an informal covenant was used generally in those churches which consisted partly of Pedobaptists and partly of Baptists, while in the case of churches formed solely of those who had once been members of Independent churches the covenant doubtless continued to be employed as the most convenient mode of organizing a church.

That the Baptists were fully aware of this long church covenant discussion is perfectly certain (though in general they do not appear to have participated in it to any great extent), for in 1645 Hanserd Knollys published a very important work, entitled

"A Moderate Answer vnto Dr. Bastwicks Book ; Called, *Independency not Gods Ordinance.* Wherein, Is declared the manner how some Chvrches in this City [London] were gathered, and upon what tearmes their Members were admitted ; That so both the Dr. and the Reader may judge, how near some Beleevers who walk together in the Fellowship of the Gospell, do come in their practice to these Apostolicall rules which are propounded by the Dr. as Gods method in gathering Churches and admitting Members"—in which work he not only shows a knowledge of the discussion concerning the formation of churches by covenant, but also gives most valuable testimony as to the formation of some of the early Baptist Churches (probably those founded by Helwys and Murton). He says in part :[1] "the Apostles and all succeeding Ministers of the Gospell should admit whosoever beleeved, and were baptized, to be Members of the Church, and teach them to observe no other things but what Christ commanded them, and for which they had his Word and warrant. . . And this (saith the Dr.) the Apostles did practice, without requiring them to take a private covenant, or enter into the Church by way of a particular covenant. . . I shall now take liberty to declare, what I know by mine own experience to be the practice of some Churches of God in this City. That so both the Dr. and the Reader may judge how near the Saints, who walk together in the Fellowship of the Gospell do come in their practice to these Apostolicall rules and practice propounded by the Dr. as Gods method in gathering Churches, and admitting Members. I say, that I know by mine own experience (having walked with them) That they were thus gathered ; viz. Some godly and learned men of approved guifts and abilities for the Ministerie, being driven out of the Countries, where they lived by the persecution of the Prelates, came to sojourn in this great City, and preached the Word of God both publikely, and from house to house, and daily in the Temples and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ : and some of them have dwelt in their own hired houses, and received all that came in unto them, preaching the Kingdome of God, and teaching those things, which

[1] P. 13 plus.

concern the Lord Jesus Christ. And when many sinners were converted by their preaching of the Gospell, some of them that beleeved consorted with them, and of professors a great many, and of the chief women not a few. And the condition which those Preachers both publikely and privately propounded to the people, unto whom they Preached, upon which they were to be admitted into the Church was Faith, Repentance, and Baptism ; and none other. And whosoever (poor as well as rich, bond as well as free, servants as well as masters) did make a profession of their Faith in Christ Jesus, and would be baptized with water into the Name of the Father, Sonne, and Holy Spirit, were admitted Members of the Church ; but such as did not beleeve, and would not be baptized they would not admit into Church-communion. This hath been the practice of some Churches of God in this City, without urging or making any particular covenant with Members upon admittance, which I desire may be examined by the Scriptures cited in the Margent, and then compared with the Doctors three conclusions from the same Scriptures. . . And my humble request to the Doctor is ; That he will use all meanes, that the method of God, and practice of the Apostles in gathering of Churches, and admitting Members, may be conscionably practised by his Brethren of both sides according to the revealed Word and Will of the Father."

That there does not seem to have been entire agreement as to the covenant idea among the Baptists, however, appears from a work of John Spilsbury [in this book spelled Spilsbery], republished at London in 1652, entitled "A Treatise concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism." In this he certainly advocates the formation of churches by an informal covenant agreement, as appears in the following quotations :

The covenant itself, is a covenant of grace and salvation, by which God of his grace takes a person or a people to himself for his own above all others, and to be their God, and to manifest upon them the riches of his grace and glory : and the manner of

which is in effect but onely thus much : Gods calling of a man to an agreement with himself in his Sonne, wherein he promises to be his God, and to give him life and happiness, and all things in Christ, and that he shall believe and rest upon his faithfulness and truth, and to take him for his God, &c. And thus I say, God and man come to an agreement in Christ, upon something passing between them, wherein they both agree, and this is called a covenant ; and I call it a covenant of grace, when the thing agreed upon is a subject of grace ; as Gods giving of man life and peace, and all things in Jesus Christ, and that he will be his God, upon whom he shall relie, and believe the accomplishment of all things in his due time ; and that he shall hear and know his will by his Sonne, and obey him in the same ; and mans free consent to God again, the he likes of all this well, and concludes with God that it shall be so. For a covenant pre-supposeth two persons at least, and also something to agree, or covenant upon : thus did God with *Abraham*, and so he doth with every believer ; and chiefly when God takes any into a Church-fellowship. . . And so much for the covenant, and what the same is.[1]

This I think we all agree in, that matter and form constitutes a Church, the matter is a company of Saints, or persons professing faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and living accordingly, that is, in holinesse of life. The form is that by which these are united and knit up together in one fellowship, and orderly body, and that is the covenant of grace that lies between God and his people ; by which *God*, visibly becomes the *God* of such persons, and they his people above all other. That this is the form of a Church ; and not baptism, I prove thus ; That by which *God* and a people become each others apart from all other people, that is the form of them : But the Covenant is that by which *God* owns a people for his, and they him for their *God ;* therefore the covenant is the form.[2]

2. That which makes a member to be a member or no member of a *Church*, that makes a *Church* to be a *Church* or no *Church*, and so that is the form of it, for there is the same reason for the whole, that is for every part ; But the covenant is that

[1] P. 22. [2] Pp. 67, 68.

which makes a member, and so the rest. . . Therefore the covenant is the form.

3. That which persons may have, and yet be no *Church*, that cannot be the form of a *Church:* But persons may have baptism, and yet no Church ; Therefore not the form. The *Church* being the greatest ordinance of *God*, and the very center of all ordinances, as . . . cannot be formed by any particular ordinance, no not by any lesse than that which comprehends all the essential parts and properties of a Church, which is *Gods* gracious covenant, that gives being to all true Churches both first and last.[1]

[In the first sense] baptism is one branch of the *Covenant*, as a truth to be revealed, and by faith to be received, as an essential truth, together with other truths, for the constituting of the *Church*, and no *Church* according to the order of Christs new Testament, either without it, or before it.

But for the last, namely, the outward administration of baptism, that ever follows the Saints mutual faith and agreement in the doctrine, wherein consists the covenant, which ever goes before the administration of baptism. So that in the first sense, the Church is not before Baptism ; but in the last sense, the Church is before baptism, though not in her visible order. Again, a Church is only so a Church before baptism, as that the end of her union is for communion.[2]

This will be further cleared in the constituting of the Church, which now follows, which constitution is the orderly collection or conjoining of persons into the New Covenant, or visible union with Christ their head, as their mutual faith and agreement in the truth to the practise of it, and so consequently into an orderly body among themselves ; wherein the Saints are the matter, and the covenant the form ; from which two concurring, the Church ariseth, and is by them constituted.

Now for the constituting causes by which God ordinarily useth to effect this work ; they are these :

1. The word of God, which is to fit and prepare the matter for the form.

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[1] P. 68 [2] P. 68.

2. The confession of faith, which is to declare the fitness of the matter for the form.

3. The free and mutual consent and agreement of the particular persons, upon the practise of the same truth believed and confessed, as aforesaid.

And lastly, the Spirit of Christ.[1]

And now being come into her [the church's] own land, as of old was signified, Ezek. 36. 24, 25, which is, into a visible covenant with God, or union with Christ, and so become his own, she is now to be washed with water in baptism, as Ezek. 16. 8, 9. . . And thus being in Covenant with God by faith in Jesus Christ, in which their state consists ; and so the agreement made, and the covenant passed between them, now the seal is set to, which is the outward ordinance of Baptism, to confirm the same ; which being done she is to enter upon her holy communion in all the rest of God's holy ordinances thereunto belonging, for her comfort and well being, so that communion in any thing is from union first with the same.[2]

In 1676 Edward Hutchinson published "A | Treatise | Concerning the | Covenant and Baptism | Dialogue-wise between | a Baptist & a Poedo-Baptist." In this book he speaks much of the covenant promises, and of what the new covenant means and is. He seems to take the position in general that Helwys and Murton had taken half a century before. At any rate, he evidently does not believe in the use of the church covenant, for he says :[3]

Bap. But what do you mean by promise? is it the promise and covenant of eternal life and salvation?

And again :[4]

4. The *Independants* have their believers, and they are such who own the faith of Christ, make a personal manifestation of

[1] Pp. 69, 70. [2] P. 72. [3] P. 5. [4] P. 52.

their faith and repentance, and so are enchurcht and become members (by a Covenant) of some particular congregations.

In 1681 "A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion. By W. Kiffin a lover of Truth and Peace," was published in London. This work incidentally refers to the author's position in regard to the church covenant idea. He seems to have held a view which required the use of no formal church covenant, but which nevertheless embraced what was fundamental in the covenant idea, yet without making it seem utterly non-apostolic in origin.

Respecting the covenant idea, he says :

Besides Christ looks for a Believer, which no Infant can at present be said to be, the want of which, makes the Baptism null, for if there be no Bond, no Covenant, no Obligation in it (as 'tis plain there is not, and they confess it) then there is no Sealing, for a Seal serves but to Ratifie & Confirm a Bond and Covenant.[1]

All things necessary to this purpose are comprised in the solemn Form of our initiation into Covenant with God, Matth. 28. 19. Our Lord Jesus Christ Commands his Apostles to Disciple all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name . . . this is the Foundation we lay of all our Obedience and Profession, which are to be regulated by this Intitial Ingagement.[2]

"Baptism is our initiation" and "This is the Pledge of our entring into Covenant with God, and our giving up our selves unto him in the Solemn Bond of Religion."[3]

The Covenant binds mutually on Gods part and on ours ; and so do the Seals which belong to the Covenant. It doth not only Seal Pardon and Sanctification on Gods part, but there is a promise and answer on our part : an answer to what? To the demands of the Covenant. . . Now our Answer to this Demand of God, and to this Interrogatory he puts to us in the Covenant, it is sealed by us in Baptism ; and it is Renewed in the Lords Supper,[4] etc.

[1] Pp. 77, 78. [2] P. 99. [3] P. 100. [4] P. 103.

In 1693 Benjamin Keach published a work in London entitled "The | Ax laid to the root : | " etc., in the second part of which, speaking of the constitution of a gospel church, he says :[1]

> The Gospel Church is not constituted, as the Jewish Church was, 'tis not National, but Congregational ; it consisteth not of the carnal Seed as such, but only of the spiritual Seed, *i. e.*, Adult Persons who believe. Where do we find, in all the New Testament, That the Children of Believers as such, were Baptized, and taken into the Church, as being in an external relative Covenant ?

In 1694, or thereabouts, Mr. Keach also published various pamphlets. A volume of these is preserved in the Angus Library in Regent's Park College, London. The first of these pamphlets is entitled "A | Golden Mine | Opened." The last pamphlet (the title is wanting) is imperfect and begins with the third chapter. In this pamphlet are the following statements, which seem to indicate that Mr. Keach followed John Smyth's view of the covenant rather than Helwys and Murton's, and believed, at least, in the use of some sort of informal or implicit covenant agreement after baptism. He says :[2]

> *Arguments to prove that those Churches who are gathered by Faith and Repentance, and upon the profession of Faith are Baptized* (*which are called Anabaptists*) *are true Churches of Christ ; which Mr. Shute denies so to be.*
>
> *1. Argument All those Churches who are right in matter and form are true Churches.*
>
> *But those Churches, falsely called Anabaptists, are right in matter and form* ergo *they are true Churches.*
>
> The matter of Churches are godly persons, or true believers ;

[1] P. 20.

[2] P. 34. Close of Chapter IV.

the true form is the order or constitution of the Gospel Church, viz. The Adult upon the profession of Faith and Repentance, Baptized ; and so with joynt consent give themselves up to the Lord, and one to another, to walk in fellowship and communion in all the Ordinances of the Gospel.

These quotations give us some idea of the trend of English Baptist thought on the church covenant idea down to the close of the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH COVENANT AMONG ENGLISH CONGREGATIONALISTS AND BAPTISTS SINCE 1640

WE may now properly inquire, What was the general outcome of the discussion in England? Did the use of the covenant become as prominent a characteristic of the church polity of Dissenters in England as it did among the early American colonists?

Presbyterianism certainly had not been directly affected by the discussion, but in 1643 Parliament had accepted the Solemn League and Covenant, and thus had made Presbyterianism the State religion during the Commonwealth period, and doubtless many Puritans may now have joined the Presbyterian Church.

Congregational churches in England also, unquestionably had been strengthened during these years, and American influence had been manifested by a growing popularity of the church covenant idea. This may possibly be one of the "many other opinions" to which reference is made in Thomas Edwards' "Third Part of GANGRÆNA," where the statement appears that "Independency, and many other opinions being first broached in *New-England*, have come over into *Old*." [1]

During this discussion American Congregationalism became in general, at least, a comparatively established

[1] P. 112.

church polity. Further, the inquiries from England which had precipitated the discussion had led to the writing of a large amount of literature by men of varied views, and had settled many differences of opinion, not only in New England, but also abroad. We may well believe, therefore, that many in England who once had entertained views of preference for the Presbyterian church now began to regard the Independent churches with more favor and, accordingly, to join them. In this sense, then, English Congregationalism is, as was stated in Edwards' "Gangræna," a development introduced from America. The truth of this, in so far as the church covenant idea is concerned, is confirmed, in part at least, by a quotation from "An Apologie | of the Churches | in New England," London, 1643, in which complaint is made by English Puritans that

The time hath been, when your selves [the American Puritans] *did not hold Church-Covenant, as now you do; when you were in England you were not of this mind, and therefore no marvell if your change since your coming to New England be suspected, and offensive.*[1]

To this charge the following answer is made:

Some of us[2] when we were in *England,* through the mercie of

[1] P. 44.

[2] Mr. John Cotton was one of these. Concerning his use of a church covenant in his church before 1632, while still a member of the Church of England, he has given us the following account, communicated to the author by Prof. Williston Walker, of Yale University: "There were some scores of godly persons in *Boston* in *Lincoln-shire* (whereof some are there still, and some here, and some are fallen asleep) who can witnesse, that we entred into a Covenant with the Lord, and one with another, to follow after the Lord in the purity of his Worship; which though it was defective, yet it was more than the Old Non-conformity. Besides, I had then learned of Mr. *Parker,* and Mr. *Baynes,* (and soon after Dr. *Ames*) that the Ministers of Christ, and the Keyes of the Government of his church are given to each particular Congregationall church respectively." ("The Way of | CONGREGATIONAL | CHURCHES | CLEARED: |" etc. London, 1648, p. 20.)

God, did see the necessitie of Church Covenant ; and did also preach it to the people amongst whom we ministred, though neither so soone nor so fully as were meete, for which we have cause to be humbled, and to judge ourselves before the Lord.

Was the church covenant generally employed in English Baptist churches, also, after 1640? Before examining the most direct testimony of the records, we may profitably examine whatever other, though meagre, evidence there may be.

When Dr. Daniel Featley published at London in 1645 his work, entitled "The Dippers Dipt. or the Anabaptists Dvck't and Plvng'd over Head and Eares, at a Disputation in *Southwark*," he evidently believed the Baptists did use a covenant in their churches, for in the Epistle Dedicatory [1] he says :

They [the Anabaptists, or rather Baptists] build one another in the faith of their sect, to the ruine of their souls ; *they flock in great multitudes to their* Jordans, *and both Sexes enter into the River, and are dipt after their manner with a kind of* spell *containing the heads of their erroneous Tenets, and their engaging themselves in their Schismaticall Covenants*, and (*if I may so speake*) combination of separation.

Rather more trustworthy, and probably more exact, testimony on this point, however, comes to us from the manuscript works of the Rev. "John Lewis, Minister of Mergate." In one of his manuscript histories of the Anabaptists [2] (for he wrote several), in speaking of the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1660, he says :

III. The Confession 1660, Art. 12 declares, that it is the duty

[1] P. 3. Text from the Sixth Edition, 1631.

[2] Rawlinson MSS. Press mark C. 410, p. 181 of one of the sections of the volume. Bodleian Library, Oxford.

of all such who are believers baptized to draw . . . unto God in submission to that principle of *Christ's* doctrine to wit, *prayer* and [a] *Laying on of hands*, etc. [a] Some of them [the Anabaptists] would have added a *Solemn Covenant*, but this was opposed by others.

Later he says further :[1]

Some of them likewise, with the Independents, placed the form of their Church in an *explicite Covenant*, wherein all and every one of the Members by a voluntary Association, without the Authority of either Magistrate or Minister do binde themselves under a solemn promise to give up themselves to the Lord in a Church-state ; than which they thought nothing could lay a greater Obligation on their Consciences. But this was opposed by others.

In another place in John Lewis' manuscript works occurs the following statement[2] in point, apparently pertaining to a time after 1696 :

It has been observed by some among themselves, that there is no *Law* or *Command* given by *Christ* or His Apostles for making or requiring any *Covenant* as the Shibboleth of Church Communion ; and yet it seems, such a Covenant is required by some of the Anabaptist [Baptist] Congregations.

In other words, even as late as 1660, probably as late as 1696, the English Baptists as a body had in reality come to no settled agreement in regard to the method of organizing their churches. From their works, previously quoted also, it would be natural to conclude that during the whole seventeenth century they were unsettled on this point.

We may now properly make a study of the English church covenant documents themselves, in order to know

[1] Reverse side of fol. 181. [2] Reverse side of fol. 166.

how generally they were employed, what was their usual form, and to trace in some manner their development.

The Covenant Among English Congregationalists Since 1640.

It is but fair and natural to begin with the covenants of the Independents, as the first Englishmen to make use of the church covenant idea. But before giving the text of the various documents, it will be profitable to see what the Rev. Thomas Harmer has to say concerning the early English Congregational churches and the covenant. He writes :[1]

We shall presently see what the plan of these Congregational churches was.

As these principles were first adopted, in modern times, by the *English refugees in Holland*, it is no wonder they spread more generally in these *eastern* counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, than in any other parts of England, which seems to be intimated by Doctor Calamy, in his account of the Ejected Ministers.[2]

The Congregational Church at *Yarmouth* is, I believe, the *oldest* in this part of the kingdom : it united together in the year 1643.[3]

The several times of the embodying of the most ancient of these churches that are still subsisting, so far as can be, I believe, *recovered*, are as followeth :

Yarmouth, 1643.	Beccles, Guestwick, } 1652.
Norwich, 1644.	
Walpole, 1647.	Wymondham, 1652.
Bury St. Edmunds, 1648.	Bradfield, 1652 or 1653.
Wrentham, 1649.	Wattesfield, 1654.
Woodbridge, 1651.	Denton, 1655.[4]

The last particular which I mentioned in the enumeration of the distinguishing points of Congregational Church Government and Discipline, was their not binding themselves unalterably

[1] "Miscellaneous Works," 1823. [2] P. 146. [3] P. 147. [4] P. 147, note.

to present arrangements, but a professing themselves willing to receive any farther light God should be pleased to communicate to them from his word. I have observed this doth not appear in the *Savoy* account of their order; it was, however, a common declaration of those churches in the times preceding that publication, at least in these counties: and there is a candour, and sense of familiarity in it, which are extremely agreeable.[1]

The fourth section of the first chapters of these Heads of Agreement [in the Savoy Confession] saith, "*A competent number* of visible saints do become the capable subjects of stated communion in all the special ordinances of Christ, upon their mutual *declared consent and agreement* to walk together therein, according to gospel rule. In which declaration different degrees of explicitness, shall no ways hinder such churches from owning each other, as instituted churches."[2]

The *Old* Congregationalists seem to have been very fond of the term COVENANT, derived from some Old Testament transactions, very different from entering into church fellowship, but, as being a Scripture term, it appeared extremely *venerable* in their eyes, and perhaps almost *sacred*. It was, I am afraid, as *disgustful* to others, appearing to them (as the New Testament never uses the term in such a sense) a *misapplication* of the word, and a sort of *enthusiastic affectation*. Candour must however admit, that if they were sometimes drawn up in too diffusive and otherwise exceptionable a manner, they were at other times *pleasingly simple*. As a proof of this, I will here transcribe a form of engagement, at the settling of that church in Suffolk, with which the writer of these papers has the nearest connexions [Wattisfield].[3]

Having given the text of the Wattisfield covenant Mr. Harmer says:

The seriousness and at the same time the *simplicity* of this engagement is such, that I can hardly imagine it would be objected to by any. At the same time they appear to be by no means attached to the term *Covenant;* the term Agreement seems to have pleased them as well; as would doubtless any other word of

[1] P. 154. [2] P. 159. [3] Pp. 159, 160.

the same general import, and expressive of their uniting together in sacred Fellowship, if any could be found less disgustful.[1]

The Congregationalists in general seem to have prized their records and carefully to have preserved them. Such characteristic painstaking in this direction has resulted to the great advantage of historical research. Of at least seven of the early churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, mentioned by Harmer, covenants have been preserved, and also some others of this early period. It will be seen that there is no progressive development manifested in these covenants. Some are extendedly explicit and some are very simple. In general they may not be classified more definitely, but the Norwich covenant is in the main a copy of that of the church in Yarmouth, from which the Norwich church proceeded. They are both extended covenants, and manifest the influence of Hugh Peter, a perfectly natural fact, for the Yarmouth church had been organized by members of the church in Rotterdam who had returned to England.

The following interesting examples of the Independent covenants of this very early period in England are worthy of examination :

THE YARMOUTH COVENANT.[2] JUNE 28, 1643.

The account of the organization of the Yarmouth church reads :

After some time by them solemnely spent in praier they [those forming the church] entred into a Church

[1] Pp. 159, 160.

[2] From MS. "Copy of | The Church Book belonging to a Society of Christians | who assemble for divine | Worship at the Old Meeting | Norwich. | Transcribed from the Original | (kindly lent to him by the Deacons | of that Church) by | Joseph Davey | Decr. 1848." P. 3. Doctor Williams' Library, London.

Couenant & subscribed their names in the manner following. It is manifest by Gods word, That God alwaies was pleased to walke in a way of Couenant with his people he promising to be their God & they promising to be his people seperated from the world & the pollutions thereof as may appeare Deut. 29 : 10, 11 &c. Isai. 56. 3 &c. Act 5. 13, 14 &c.

Wee therefore whose names are underwritten being desirous, in the feare of God to worship & serue him according to his reuealed will doe freely, solemnely, & jointly Couenant with the Lord in the presence of his Saints & Angels.

1. That we will for euer acknowledge & auouch God for our God in Christ Jesus.

2. That we will alwaies endeauour through the grace of God assisting us to walke in all his waies & ordinances according to his written word, which is the onely sufficient rule of good life for euery man, neither will we suffer our selues to be polluted by any sinfull waies either publike or priuate but abstaine from the uery appearance of euill, giuing no offence to the Jew or Gentile, or Churches of Christ.

3. That we will in all loue improue our Comunion as brethren by watching ouer one another, & as neede shalbe, counsell, admonish, reproue, comfort, releeue, assist & beare with one another, humbly submitting our selues to the gouernment of Christ in his Churches.

4. Lastly we doe not promise these things in our owne, but in Christ's strength neither doe we confine ourselues to the words of this Couenant but shall at all times account it our duty to embrace any further light or trueth which shalbe reuealed to us out of God's word.

The Norwich Covenant.[1] June 10, 1644.

The record concerning the organization of the Norwich church reads :

[1] Norwood Church Book, as copied by Davey. P. 11. Doctor Williams' Library, London.

Being mett upon the day appointed, in the presence of Mr Oxenbridge with diuers of the Church at Yarmouth, & also diuers other godly friends in Norwich They spent the former part of the day in prayer; And then one in the name of the rest made a profession of faith, Whereunto all the rest gaue their assent. Then one of them read the Couenant as followeth to which they all subscribed their names.

It is manifest by God's word that God alwaies was pleased to walke in a way of Couenant with his people Knit together in a visible Church estate; he promising to be their God & they promising to be his people separated from the world & the pollutions thereof as may appeare therein.

We therefore whose names are subscribed being desirous (in the feare of God) to worship & serue him according to his reuealed will, & beleeuing it to be our duty to walke in a way of Church couenant, doe freely & solemnly Couenant with the Lord & one another in the presence of his saints and Angells.

1. That we will for euer acknowledge & auouch the Lord to be our God in Christ Jesus giuing up our selues to him to be his people.

2. That we will alwaies endeauour through the grace of God assisting us to walke in all his waies & ordinances according to his written word which is the onely sufficient rule of good life for euery man. Neither will we suffer our selues to be polluted by our sinfull waies either publike or priuate, but endeauor to abstaine from the very appearance of euill, giuing no offence to the Jew or Gentile or the Churches of Christ.

3. That we will humbly & willingly submitt ourselues to the gouernment of Christ in this Church in the administration of the word, the seales & discipline.

4. That we will in all loue improue our comunion as brethren by watching ouer one another and (as neede shalbe) counsell admonish reproue comfort releeue assist & beare with one another seruing one another in loue.

5. Lastly we doe not Couenant or promise these things in our owne but in Christ's strength, neither doe we confine ourselues to the words of this Couenant, but shall at all tymes account it our duty to imbrace any further light or trueth which shalbe reuealed to us out of God's word.

Covenant used at Edmonsbury, 1646.[1]

Be it knowne vnto all the saints of Sion that wee whose names are vnderwritten knowing that there is but one eternall God, Creater and Gouernour of all things, distinguished into three w^ch^ beare record in heauen. . . . And wee seing not only the necesity of this Separation, but also the great need of continuing in Christian fellowship, and Societie, and that to be of y^e^ visible particular Church of Christ is most needfull for the Saints edification in this life it being y^e^ exelentest Kingdome of grace, wherby they may enioy all the ordinances of God, according to their capabillity. And seing that there is no such particular Church visible neer vnto vs but so remote that wee canot without breach of the Saboth assemble with, . . And considering that God alowes of Particular Churches in one Nation, And wee his Saints being possessed with the thoughts of y^e^ exelencie therof, and the sweete-closing-neer-communion which the Saints of God haue with Christ therin, Wee, in the Presence of y^e^ greate God, whose glorious fulness the heauen, and y^e^ heauen of heauens canot containe. Wee doe therefore, together with our posteritie, Couenant, to become a peculiar Temple for the Holy Ghoste to dwell in, an entier spouse of Jesus Christ our Lord of glory, for y^e^ enioyment of all his holy ordinances, according to his owne institutions, and so to walke in all his waies so far as he hath reueiled vnto vs, or shall reueile hearafter.

[1] From MS. "Copy | of the | Old Church Book | belonging to the | Society | of | Congregational Dissenters | assembling for divine worship | at the | Meeting House | situate in | Whiting Street, | Bury St. Edmunds | Suffolk:" etc., etc. 1646–1801. "Transcribed from the Original | by | Joseph Davey | October | 1849." Pp. 1–3. Doctor Williams' Library.

In testimony wherof (in the town of Edmonsbury in Suffolk this 16th day of the moneth commonly called August) being the Lord's day) wee doe now subscribe with our hands vnto Jehouah and to his Christ.

The foregoing, although first in chronological order, stands at the end of the book in the original.

In the Gould Manuscript, No. 23, is "An Account of A Church that usually met in Southwark near S^{t} Mary Overys Church, from their first Constitution in y^{e} Reign of K. Iames | , to their Dissolution in 1705. . . taken out of their Church Book, &c." This begins: "According to y^{e} best Account from Ancient Members therein, & such Notices as in Old Books we find: That about y^{e} Year 1621 was this Church constituted in Gospel Order, & carried on by one M^{r} Hubbert."

The church was, doubtless, organized by covenant, for when Samuel How became a member, the record says: "they Solemnly renewed & confirmed their antient League & Covenant one wth another, & then did freely Elect, Choose, & Ordain y^{e} Said Sam^{l}. How to be their Pastor."

The record reads thus:

In this Year 1648. there was renewing of their Covenant In these words following w^{ch} I think meet to transcrib, viz:

Memorandum. That we whose Names are Subscribed In consideration & sense of our manyfould Sins & Miscariages in our personal & publick Relation, & our exceeding unworthy management of y^{e} Scepter of Iesus Christ comitted to us as his Church & People, much to his Dishonour & our own Grief of Spirit; & for y^{e} gaining Ability for y^{e} future, to reforme y^{e} Evils amongst Us, did address our Selves to y^{e} Lord by Prayer And did in y^{e} Presence of him & each other, according to y^{e} measure of Grace afford'd renew & declare our vissible Relation & Intrest to & in him & each other, as a Church & Spouse of Christ Iesus, wth our Resolutions to Persevere accordingly as God shall afford Ability.

Signed y^{e} 23d May, 1648.

The Bury St. Edmunds Covenant of 1648.[1]

Decemb the 21th 1648

We those names are heare subscribed doe resolue and ingage by the helpe of the Spirit of god to walke in al the wayes of god so far forth as he hath reuealled or shall reueall them on to us by his word and in all deuteys of Loue & wachfullnes each to others as become a Church of Christ.

The Woodbridge Covenant.[2]

The "Records" read concerning the organization of the church :

It was in the year 1651 y^t^ Several Serious Christians in and about Woodbridge in y^e^ County of Suffolk were associated and framed into a Visible Church for Christ, according to the Congregational Way & Order, under the Direction & Oversight of y^e^ Reverend M^r^ Frederich Woodal ; and were Cemented by y^e^ following Covenant, w^ch^ I have met with in a Parchment Roll, thus drawn up.

The Church Covenant.

The 18th day of y^e^ Seaventh Month 1651. September [evidently later inserted].

1 We do profess before y^e^ Lord, this day, that He is our God, whom we haue chosen, to whom we are joyned, upon whose Covenant we take hold for y^t^ we want, to whom also we giue up our Selves according to that Covenant, and all y^t^ we haue.

2 We do, and will (in y^e^ power of his Spirit) receive

[1] MS. "Copy of the Old Church Book" . . . as the preceding, p. 5.
It seems that this covenant was that used at the final organization of the church in 1648. The preceding covenant of 1646 evidently was employed before the organization had been completed.

[2] MS. "Copy | of the | Records | of the Congregational Church | worshipping at the | Quay Meeting | Woodbridge 1651–1851. | " Transcribed by Joseph Davey. Pp. 1, 2. In Doctor Williams' Library, London.

Iesus Christ our King, Priest & Prophet, depending upon him for Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification & Redemption y^t^ glorying we may glory in y^e^ Lord.

3 We will, through Grace, Endeavour to Know y^e^ Scriptures more fully, which onely are able to make us wise unto Salvation, that we may embrace all y^e^ promises, obey all y^e^ precepts walk in all y^e^ Ways laid out for us therein, being led by y^e^ Spirit, and living, and walking in Him.

4 We freely and chearfully give up ourselves each to other to become one lump, & one stick in the Lord's hand, and will (the Lord assisting us) submit our selves one to another in y^e^ fear of God ; watch over one another, and doing all things becoming those of the same Body, and whose Heart is one, & Way one in y^e^ Lord.

5 We will (the Lord helping us) Endeavour to keep Unity of y^e^ Spirit in y^e^ Bond of Peace, doing nothing through Strife or Vain glory, but following after things that make for Quiet, and things wherein one may Edify another.

6 We will (in Power received from on high) hold fast what we haue received till y^e^ Lord come, obeying our Governours, in Him, pleasing our Neighbours in Him, instructing our Children in the Knowledg of his Will, observing all the laws of his House, the Laws of y^e^ Sabbath, Prayer, Fasting, and Thanksgiving, hearing our great Prophet in all things, walking after Him, that we may give no Offense to Jew or Gentile, nor to y^e^ Church of Christ ; but may Exercise our selves unto Godliness, which hath the Promise of this Life, and of that also which is to come.

The Cockermouth Covenant.

October 2, 1651, the Congregational Church at Cockermouth was formed in the following manner :[1]

[1] Josiah Thompson's "Hist. of Dissenting Congregations." Vol. I., Cumberland, No. 5.

These seven after solemn Invocation of God & mutual Satisfaction in each other agreed in y^e^ following Confession & Engagement viz

We poor Worms lost in Adam, being by y^e^ Grace of God thro' y^e^ Spirit called to be Saints considering it to be our Duty to observe Gospel Ordinance for the future do agree togather to walk as a People whom y^e^ Lord hath chosen into holy Communion of Saints and we do mutually promise to watch over one another in y^e^ Lord & to do all such Things according to our best Light, that are required of a church in order, and to submit to our Lawful Officers that shall from Time to Time be chosen out from among us. and this in y^e^ Presence of the Lord we resolve & promise hoping that of his Goodness & according to his wonted dealing with his People He will carry us on to his Praise

The Beccles Covenant.[1] July 6, 1652.

This covenant must have been exceedingly simple for the church book begins with the following statement:

The names of such persons whoe have covenanted togither to walke in y^e^ wayes of Christ according to Gospell Order, w^th^ an account of such matters as haue occurred in y^e^ Church at Beccles.

In y^e^ day & yeare above written, these following p'sons joyned in covenant togither under y^e^ visible Regiment of Christ, according to y^e^ Gospell, vz. Joh. Clarke, James King, jun Rob^t^. Ottey, Edm. Nevill, Joh. Morse, Will^m^ Cutlove, Edm. Artis, Rob^t^. Horne, Joh. Botswaine.

Organization of the Church in Guestwick in 1652.

The church in Guestwick may not have used a covenant at the time of its organization. At any rate, the

[1] "Brief Records | of the | Independent Church, | at | Beccles, Suffolk: | By | Samuel Wilton Rix." | London, 1887. Pp. 111–113. Bodleian Library, Oxford.

account of the formation of the church is limited in Joseph Davey's Copy of the Church Book[1] to a few words, to the effect that "The Church of Christ in and about Gestwick, sate down in Gospell order in the latter end of the year 1652, and chose Mr Richard Woorts for their pastour."

In 1695, however, a day was observed for "renewal of their covenant," so that sometime before that date the church must have employed such a document. At this time a new covenant, which had been drawn up, was accepted by the church. This will be given in its chronological order.

The Wattisfield Covenant.[2]

Concerning the church in Wattisfield and its early covenant, Josiah Thompson says:

The Account that is given there [*i. e.*, in the remains of the Church Book] begins thus:

"The Church at [of] Christ which at first set down at Weston the 14th of the 7th Month in the Year 1654 in the fellowship of the Gospel after the Congregational way & according to the profession of Faith & Order with the Church Covenant or agreemt before declared &c & began to revive & flourish under the Ministry of Mr. Benton for about 7 years last past at lenth by the good Providence of God attained a Compleatment after they had renew'd the Foundation Covenant a second setting down at Watesfield with Mr. Wincop their Pastor." This was done it seems by the Book May 2, 1678.

It appears from the Profession of Faith & order referr'd to in the preceeding Paragraph that they were Persons who well understood the Principles of the Congregational Denomination particularly

[1] P. 2. Doctor Williams' Library.

[2] In Josiah Thompson's MS. "History of Protestant Dissenting Congregations," written in 1772. Vol. IV. Suffolk. No. 23. Doctor Williams' Library, London.

with respect to *Liberty* & *Forbearance* not so well understood at that time by some other Christians as they have been since.

The form of Agreement is also much more simple than some others I have seen. It is in these words :

We do covenant or agree in the Presence of God thro' the Assistance of His Holy Spirit to walk together in all the Ordinances of the Lord Iesus so far as the same are made clear unto us endeavouring the advancement of the Glory of our Father the subjection of our Will to the Will of our Redeemer and the mutual Edification of each other in his most Holy Faith & Fear.

Besides these early covenants may also be mentioned those of the churches in Bassingtown, Rowel, and at Keysoe, of the dates 1655, 1656, and 1657, etc.

The Bassingtown Covenant.[1]
Date about 1655.

Josiah Thompson says concerning the organization of the church in Bassingtown :

The first members of this Church were embodied and all others afterward admitted on a profession of Repentance toward God, and Faith in our Lord Iesus Christ and the following covenant was read and subscribed by all the members standing :

We do in the presence of the Lord Jesus the awful crowned King of Sion and in the presence of his holy angels and people, and all beside here present Solemnly give up ourselves to the Lord and to one another by the will of God, solemnly promising & engaging in the aforesaid presence to walk with the Lord, and with one another in the observation of all Gospel Ordinances and the discharge of all relative duties in this Church of God, & Elsewhere as the Lord shall enlighten and enable us.

Subscribed by A B C D &c.

Thus the Church was first embodied. When a Member was afterward received the Pastor used to say—Brother (or Sister) If you now in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the awful Crowned

[1] MS. "History of Protestant Dissenting Congregations." 1772. Josiah Thompson. Vol. I. Cambridgeshire.

King of Sion &c do now solemnly give up yourself &c (mutatis mutandis) signify it by lifting up your right hand to the Lord, and then on the part of the Church the person admitting liffting up his Right hand said, We likewise in the aforesaid awful presence do receive you into our Communion solemnly promising and engaging to carry it towards you as becomes a Church of Christ, watching over you in the Lord as he shall enable us and in Testimony thereof to give you the right hand of Fellowship.

The Rowell Covenant.[1]

Concerning the formation of the church in Rowel Thomas Coleman says:

In the year 1655, those who had been converted under his [Mr. Beverly's] ministry became united together in the fellowship of the Gospel as a Christian society. A Church covenant was drawn up, and signed by every member. This being the earliest of the kind that we have discovered among the Northamptonshire Churches, it may not be unsuitable to give it a place in these memorials.

A Covenant renewed and subscribed by the reformed Church at Rowell.

Whereas, being by nature enemies to God and aliens from his covenant of mercy, hateful and hating one another, it pleased God of his free grace to admit us into covenant privileges by baptism, wherein we engaged, and whereby we were bound, to walk as new creatures adopted and redeemed, wholly attending to his blessed will revealed in the Gospel, we do now, with shame and loathing of ourselves, most solemnly acknowledge to his glory that we have most abominably corrupted ourselves, his worship, and the holy covenant of our peace, to the blemish of our holy profession, the scandalizing of many, the grief of God's Holy Spirit and people, and now, through mercy, to the grief of our own spirits; so that we abhor ourselves for all our former ignorant and disorderly walking. And seeing how God hath called upon us by his word and Spirit to lay hold yet again of his covenant, so in a proper season of reformation—seeing he is pleased to continue the proposal of such an unworthy people to himself, lo!

[1] See Thomas Coleman's "Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire," London, 1853. Pp. 47, 48.

how can we be ashamed of his truth and Gospel? We do, therefore, humbly tender ourselves to Jesus Christ and his ministry, in this renewed profession and covenant subscribed—viz., that, through the grace of God, we will constantly maintain and walk according to the whole will of God revealed in the Scriptures, and comprised in the articles above mentioned; professing them against all error, heresy, and profaneness, in due order, as members of this one particular Church, for enjoyment of all Christ's ordinances, performance of all members' duties, in subjection to our pastors, ruling officers, and to each other in the Lord; holding due communion with all other reformed Churches of Christ in the world, that so we may be built up in knowledge and holiness, better to maintain our obedience to Christ, the common interest of the saints, and so more please and glorify God. Accordingly attest to remember his covenant and us, in the approaching day of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be all glory for ever. Amen.
Anno Domini 1655.
(Signed) John Beverly, etc., etc.

The Keysoe Covenant[1] of [1657?].

We whose names are hereunder written having found by sad experience how uncomfortable itt is to walke in a dissordered unsettled condition, and having a desire to take off all the ordinances of god which are made known unto us out off his word: doe therefore this day give up o^r^ selves to the lord and to the word of his grace to be guided governed and directed by him in all his wayes: And we doe likewise promise in the presence off the lord to walk with our brethren and sisters in this Congregation with all watchffullness and tenderness avoiding all Jealousies, Suspitions, back bitings and Censurings and to have speciall regard to that rule of the lord Jesus to bear and forbear to give and forgive one another as he himself hath taught us and we doe likewise desire to obey god in all his Comands and to give no offence to the Jew nor Gentile nor to the church of God as much as in us lyeth.

[1] MS. History in five vols., entitled "Some Account of the Nonconformist Churches at Hail Weston & St Neots in the County of Huntington—In five volumes—Compiled from Church Books and other authentic documents—By Joseph Rix F. L. S." etc. "MDCCCLV." Vol. I., p. 26. Doctor Williams' Library, London.

Scarcely more than half a dozen members constituted the church who signed this covenant—the first autograph being that of "Jo: Donne Pastor."

A Later and Undated Covenant of the Keysoe Church.[1]

Wee the Bretheren of the Church of Christ in and about Keston being sensable in som mesuer of the neclect of our duty and unnfaithfullness to Christ in our not walking with him in his blessed ordinances and espetially that of lord's super and allso finding our deare Bretheren and Sisters goeing som one way and som another and seeing our soules disapointed at present in that which we so much desiered and longed after that was the gathering the wholl into one againe we thought it therefore our immediate duty without furder delay to fall into the practticale part of those holy things of god that we in the wholl walked so long together in and therefore in order to our enjoyment of those glorious ordinances of Jesus Christ we have met together and hav in the feare of god Renued our Covenant and doe resolve y^e^ lord helping of us to put ourselves into an orderly way for the enjoying those ordynances of Christ that we have met with much of god in.

We now have seen that after 1640 Independent churches in England were frequently organized, and that a church covenant almost invariably was employed at their formation. These covenant documents were all very informal in expression, some being short and simple, others drafted by those who had come directly or indirectly under the influence of Hugh Peter, being without exception somewhat extended and explicit.

[1] "Some Account of the Nonconformist Churches." . . Vol. I., p. 82. Doctor Williams' Library, London. This covenant was drawn up probably toward the close of the seventeenth century.

The two following covenants, though drawn up as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century, are extremely simple :

Church Covenant of the Particular Church of Christ. Castle Hill, Northampton. Date, about 1695.

We, this Church of Christ, whose names are underwritten, having given up ourselves to the Lord and one to another according to the will of God, do promise and covenant, in the presence of God, to walk together in all the laws and ordinances of Christ, according to the rules of his Gospel through Jesus Christ so strengthening us.[1]

Covenant of the Congregational Church of Christ at Northampton,[2] "Planted on Oct : y^E 27, 1697."

The Church Covenant.

Wee the Members of this Church of God whose Names are all inserted in this Book ; Do solemnly promise in the presence of God and his holy Angells, and also in the pre-sence of each other, to walk together in the per-formance of all Gospel-Ordinances, and in the practice and discharge of all Relitive Duties as the Lord shall please to enable us. And whereas we differ in our Iudgements about Water Baptism, We do now Solemnly declare, That we that are for Infant : Bap-tism do not hereby, nor will not impose on the C of any of our Brethren or Sisters that are among [us that] are for Baptism upon Profession of Faith. s . . .[3 er] hand, We that are for believers Baptism do not nor will not impose on the Consciences of any of our Brethren or Sisters that are

[1] Thomas Coleman's "Memorials of the Independent Churches."

[2] Copy of original Records of the Congregational Church of Christ at Northampton. P. 2. Formerly in possession of Taylor & Son, Northampton.

[3] Word wholly or partly illegible.

amongst us, that are for Infant Baptis . . .[1] : Nor will we . . .[1] Party, or any of us) impose upon any that hereafter ma . . .[1] yn in Communion with us : But do all promise (freely & cordially, without casting Reflections, &c. on the Persons or Practice of any) to leave every one to his or her Liberty of Iudgment & Practice herein : Each . . .[1] walking Conscientiously up to our Light ; Engaging & Endeavouring in the Strength of Christ that our difference in Iudgement shall not cause Breach of Union or Affection.

Just about the time that these last two simple covenants were used the Guestwick covenant was drawn up. It is an extended and very explicit covenant, consisting of a long introduction and twelve specific divisions. It reads as follows :

The Guestwick Covenant of 1695.[2]

The Church Book says concerning this covenant :— "y^e^ 13^th^ of June [16]95 was kept as a solemn day in order to y^e^ Church's renewall of their covenant with y^e^ Lord and one another, for y^e^ quickning and stirring to w^ch^ duty Mr. Mills preach'd a sermon from y^e^ 2 of Chron. y^e^ 29^th^ and y^e^ 10^th^ v: after which y^e^ following covenant drawn up by him, was read and engaged to."

Our Covenant and solemn Engagement.

We (who are here present before y^e^ Lord, a poor Church of Jesus Christ, in whom God hath called us to y^e^ Knowledge of himself, and thereby to y^e^ faith, order,

[1] Word wholly or partly illegible.

[2] MS. "Copy of | 'A | 'Register or Church Book. | 'Containing y^e^ most materiall matters | 'transacted in y^e^ Church of Christ | 'walking in y^e^ faith and fellowship of y^e^ | 'Gospel in & about | 'Guestwick.' | 1652 to 1850 | Transcribed from the original, borrowed | of the Rev^d^ Robert Drane | Pastor of that Church | by Joseph Davey | 1850." | Pp. 9–11. Doctor Williams' Library, London.

and fellowship of y^e^ Gospel, having given our selves to y^e^ Lord, and to one another, by y^e^ will of God) do humbly adknowledg y^t^ we are less than y^e^ least of all his mercys, and have not walk'd worthy of our holy profession, and heavenly calling, but have fallen under manifold decays in faith, love, and obedience to y^e^ dishonour of Christ, greif of y^e^ spirit, stumbling of others, and disquietment of our own consciences ; wherefore (considering y^e^ call of God to us in his word and providences) we do here humbly, and solemnly engage our selves unto him, promising, in his strength y^t^ we will for y^e^ future constantly adhere to him, and cleave to him as our God in Christ, and will endeavour (by y^e^ aids of his grace, and supplys of his spirit) to walk more humbly, holily, and fruitfully before him ; and w^th^ all diligence to observe, and do y^e^ things which our Lord Jesus hath commanded us ; as,

1 of all y^t^ we will unfeignedly endeavour to depart from all sin and evill, which either is, or shall be made known to us from y^e^ word of God, y^e^ 1 of y^e^ Thessalonians y^e^ 5^th^ and y^e^ 22 :

2 y^t^ we will as much as in us lyes, frequent y^e^ solemn assemblys & attend upon y^e^ ministry of Christ in y^e^ Church, and y^e^ ordinances of his house therein administred, allthough our coming at them may be through many hazards and difficultys.

3 y^t^ we will constantly attend unto y^e^ discharge of those particular dutys which are encumbent on us in y^e^ severall places, and capacitys in which we do (or may) stand to each other in y^e^ Church, whither as officers, or private particular members.

4 y^t^ we will carefully watch over one another as much as in us lyes, not suffer sin to rest upon each other, y^t^ we will both patiently take, and meekly give reproof in love, when it's just and necessary.

5 y^t^ in case of private offence we will observe and walk by y^e^ rule of y^e^ Lord Jesus, y^e^ 18^th^ of Matthew, y^e^ 15^th^, telling it to our brother firstly, and secretly, as being

tender of his name, avoiding and forbearing sinfull whisperings and backbitings.

6 y^t^ we will be tender of y^e^ peace and prosperity of y^e^ Church, carefully avoiding those things or courses y^t^ have a tendancy to y^e^ breaking of it's unity, and making divisions amongst us.

7 y^t^ we will seriously attend more strict observation of y^e^ Lord's day with a more diligent and constant attendance of y^e^ worship of God in our familys, together with those relative dutys w^ch^ are encumbent on us in y^e^ severall relations wherein we stand.

8 y^t^ we will humbly and meekly submit unto all y^e^ appointments and institutions of Jesus Christ in y^e^ Church.

9 y^t^ we will endeavour all our days to walk in love and peace with one another, if God shall give or continue opportunitys so to do.

10 y^t^ as we are separate from, and do renounce, so we will not hold communion with y^e^ world in their way of worship, but cleave unto y^e^ pure institutions of Jesus Christ ; whatever tryals or persecutions we may meet with for so doing.

11 y^t^ we will endeavour in y^e^ general course of our conversations so to walk as not to lay stumbling blocks before sinners to harden them in their sins, and prejudice them against y^e^ ways of Christ ; but y^t^ we and ours as much as in us lyes will so walk and carry it y^t^ we may not give any just offence either to jew *and* gentile, or y^e^ Church of Christ.

12 and Lastly, in testimony of our sincere purpose, resolution, and promise herein, we do solemnly lift up our hands to God in y^e^ heav'ns, taking hold of his covenant and promise in Christ for our help and stability herein.

There was a strong tendency in England during the eighteenth century to use more extended covenants than those employed by the early Independents. In 1721 a covenant covering twenty-five printed pages was pub-

lished in London under the title "The | Covenant | To be the | Lord's People, | And to | Walk after the Lord ; | Signed by the | Church of Christ, | Under the Pastoral Care of | Joseph Jacob, | A Servant of | Christ Crucify'd." It is needless to say that such a covenant would never become popular, and is too long to be quoted.

During the eighteenth century, however, short, simple covenants often continued to be used by the Independent churches in England, and even by the middle of the century evidently there were people of certain districts who were not acquainted with the method of organizing a church by covenant, for when in 1744 the church at Milburn Port, composed of Dissenters, which had had pastors of different denominations, was re-organized on the covenant plan, it is said in Josiah Thompson's account to have been "formed on a Model entirely new at least as to this Neighbourhood."

The Milburn Port Covenant.

Mr. Thompson says[1] concerning the organization of the church in Milburn Port :

About y^e^ Beginning of the Year 1743 M^r^ Geo Lewis Young a Member of the Church at Horsly-Down Hants accepted of an Invitation to take y^e^ Care of the Church of Milbourne-Port ; & was ordained there y^e^ Same Year. M^r^ Young had his Education at y^e^ Academy, which is Supported by y^e^ Kings Head Society in London and in the Year 1744 the Church now under his Care was formed on a Model entirely new at least as to this Neighbourhood. Agreeable to this They are Said *to give up themselves to y^e^ Lord, & to one another in a Church Way, by subscribing what is called a Covenant, which consists of a Declaration of their Belief of*

[1] In Josiah Thompson's MS. "Hist. of Protestant Dissenting Congregations," 1772. Vol. IV. Somersetshire, No. 25, Milburn Port.

some particular Doctrines, and their Solemn Profession of a devout Acknowledgment of God as their God & of their Surrender of themselves to Him & to one another according to his Will, and his Church & People.

And tho this Form was not so universally acceptable as to be immediately Subscribed by all of them, yet all who had been admitted as Members of y^e^ Church acquiesced in it so far as to continue in Communion with them.

In 1748 the following comparatively explicit and expressive covenant was drawn up on the formation of a church in Southwold, Suffolk.

The Southwold Covenant.

The record[1] says concerning the organization of the Southwold church :

This Church was first formed on Tuesday, October 11, 1748, by the Reverend George Wiggett, who was chosen pastor, and who, with ten others, entered into covenant as follows :

Church Covenant.

The articeles upon which we, as a Christian Church, we whose names are here under written, promise a mutual agreement with each other, appearing to us agreeable to Scripture, and necessary to preserve us from error and impiety, and yet tending to secure the Catholic Church, which every Church of Christ should be governed by are as follows, viz. :

1^st^ That the persons who shall first consent to join with each other in church fellowship, shall mutually declare their satisfaction in each other as to their sincerity in the profession of Christianity.

2^nd^ That whoever shall after that desire to join themselves to us shall give an account of their competency in the Knowledge of Christianity to their pastor, and of their sober life and conversation to him and the rest of the Church. But

3^rd^ The manner of doing it shall be left indifferent, whether by Solemn profession made by themselves in writing, or by word of mouth, or by the testimony of credible persons best acquainted with them. If they choose to declare themselves they shall have

[1] See Harmer MS., No. 9, "Nonconformity in Suffolk." Pp. 110, 111. Dr. Williams' Library, London.

liberty, but still the testimony of others shall be joined with them. If through bashfulness or any other cause they are averse to this method, provided their conversation shall be well attested they shall be received notwithstanding.

4th If any admitted be guilty of sins inconsistent with a profession of Christianity they shall be admonished, reproved, suspended, or excluded from the Communion of the Church according as the nature of the crime shall be.

5th That upon a sincere repentance, well evidenced, they shall be restored or taken into the Church again.

Lastly, That in all matters of controversy we will be determined by the sole authority of the Bible, and wherein we are at a loss, we will call in the assistance of other parties for their advice and direction.

The Mattishall Covenant.

In the formation of the church at Mattishall in Norfolk, in 1772, also, a short, simple covenant was used. Concerning the organization of the church Josiah Thompson [1] says:

Accordingly the Revd. Mr Iohn Carter was solemnly ordained at Mattishall, Sepr 30, 1772, their first pastor, the Church consisting then of Eight other Men, who had solemnly embodied themselves together as a Church of Christ. Which will appear by reciting a paper read publickly at the beginning of the Transactions of the said 30th, Septr. . . . "we therefore by the kind Assistance of some Friends, endeavor'd to provide this place for the Dispensation of the Gospel amongst us, in a Way & Manner wch we apprehend to be agreeable to the Scriptures, and in order thereto (uniting ourselves together after the following Manner) we unitedly proposed to solicit the Assistance of the Revd Mr. Iohn Carter in the Work of the Ministry, & having had Trial of his Gifts for near 15 Months, we unitedly join in one Invitation (having previously to this, form'd ourselves into a Church) to call him to the exercise of the pastoral Office among us.

"We whose names are hereunto subscribed acknowledging the great Goodness of God to us, who we trust has called us out of Darkness into his marvellous Light, and translated us from the Power of Satan into the Kingdom of his dear Son, do by this solemnly profess our intention of giving up ourselves to the Lord, & to one another, according to the Will of God, stedfastly purposing to walk together in the Observance of all the Ordinances

[1] "History of Protestant Dissenting Congregations." 1772. Vol. IV. Norfolk, No. 10.

of Christ, & we do hereby as in the sight of God solemnly profess that it is our avowed Design, sincere Intention, and hearty desire, to seek each others spiritual Welfare & the Glory of God, and to this end we purpose & promise to watch over each other with a Christian Spirit of Love & Tenderness &c. This we purpose, this we profess in the Strength of the Lord, So help us Our God ! Amen."

Signed by Eight Men.

These documents which have been quoted give us a sufficient idea of the development of the covenant among the English Congregationalists. It was for two centuries constantly used in the organizing of their churches. Though often simple in the earlier years of their history, it became more and more extended as the denomination grew, until in one or two instances it passed in extent all bounds of good judgment. English Congregationalists of the present day seldom, if ever, make use of the covenant idea, yet there were probably occasional instances during the nineteenth century when English Congregational churches were formed by use of a covenant.[1] This, however, was exceptional. As to the cause of the decline in the use of the covenant idea among English Congregationalists, also as to the period when the decline is first to be observed, Principal George P. Gould, of Regent's Park College, London, says :[2] "My impression is that these Covenants fell into neglect during the time of spiritual decline in the eighteenth century, and that they were not restored to their former position when the churches themselves revived." This seems to state the case exactly.

[1] Principal George P. Gould, Regent's Park College, London, says, in a letter to the author, that he has heard of one case of an English Congregational church being organized by use of a covenant in Cambridgeshire as recently as 1815. But he says also : "Here and there possibly similar instances might be forthcoming, but their rarity is in striking contrast to the prevalent practice of the seventeenth century."

[2] In the letter to which reference is made in the preceding note.

The Covenant Among English Baptists Since 1640.

We may now pass to a study of the development of the covenant in English Baptist churches. First it may be remarked, however, that Baptists do not appear to have been so careful as the Congregationalists in making records and preserving them, and, further, so many Baptists remained in congregations composed of Congregationalists and Baptists, or sometimes at least made so little distinction, when separate, between their churches and those of the Congregationalists, that it is often extremely difficult to obtain satisfactory answers to the questions that arise concerning the earlier English Baptists. Fortunately, however, a sufficient number of early Baptist records have been preserved to show that English Baptist churches never have entirely been agreed on the propriety of using a church covenant. Many churches, however, have made use of the covenant idea, as is shown by the following Baptist covenant documents and references to the use of the covenant idea among Baptists.

Adam Taylor, in speaking of the manner of organizing General Baptist churches during the seventeenth century, has the following remark :[1]

> When a number of persons, thus qualified, had agreed to unite and maintain the interest of their Saviour, they set apart a day for fasting and prayer ; when, after solemnly devoting themselves to the service of God, they gave to each other the right hand of fellowship ; and generally [1] subscribed their names to a mutual

[1] "History of the English General Baptists," London, 1818, Part I., p. 411. The above statement concerning the general use of a covenant among the early General Baptists is apparently too strong. The author would substitute the word "sometimes" or "often" for "generally."

covenant, containing a few rules by which they proposed to conduct themselves as members of the same society.

In the Epistle "To the Christian Reader" of Thomas Wynell's book entitled "THE | COVENANTS | Plea for | INFANTS": | . . . Oxford, 1642, occurs the following passage,[1] which suggests the close relation that early existed between Congregationalists and Baptists, and the way in which Baptist churches sometimes came to employ church covenants:

There were nere unto my dwelling a company of the Separation, who undertooke [about 1641] to erect a Church by entring into a Covenant, and these carried on their resolutions hand-smooth, untill they were grown into a great faction. And (as it is the property of that Schisme to speake at randome) they began to let flie against the Church assemblies of England, as false, Antichristian, and out of Gods way.

VVhereupon I began to enquire into the nature of their Covenant, and told them, that if it were a Covenant of first entrance into the true visible Church of Christ, then of necessity the parties so entring must have the seale of first entrance imprinted upon them, which (under the Gospell) is Baptisme. . . Thus (by way of arguing) I spake unto diverse of them, which did so puzzle them, that not long after some of them fell upon the practice of sealing their covenant by Baptisme, renouncing their Baptisme in their infancy, as a nullity and an Idoll. and being demanded by the Magistrates of the City of Gloucester (before whom they were convented) who it was that advised them into this practice, they nominated mee to be the first that put them upon it: whereas I was so farre from it, that I held that the dangerous Covenant of the Separation would necessarily lead unto this. . . But he ["Walter Coles of Painsewicke a Taylor"] goes further, and turnes plaine Anabaptist. And so making a journey to London hee brings downe one Thomas Lambe a chandler (as is reported) and one Clem: Writer a

[1] Pp. viii.–x.

Factor in Blackwell-hall London (both Anabaptists) into this Countrey. And I being in London, these two travellors (by Walter Coles his directions) came on the Lords-day to Cranham (where I did and doe serve in the worke of the Ministery) and there the said Lamb (being in a grey-suit) offers to preach in publike, but being disappointed by Gods good providence of his wicked purpose, he retires to a private house in Cranham abovesaid, and by Preaching there he subverted many. And shortly after in an extreame cold, and frosty time, in the night season, diverse men and women were rebaptized in the great river of Severne in the City of Gloucester.

The Covenant of the Broadmead Baptist Church, Bristol, 1640.

The first Baptist covenant of which the text has been preserved is probably that of "a Church of Christ meeting in Broadmead, Bristol." The records[1] of this church say that those who desired to form the church were "strengthened" "with fear and holy trembling, to take up holy resolutions to follow the Lord; giving up themselves to him to walk before him all the days of their lives in his ways, and joining together, in the fear of the Lord, to separate from the worship of the times."

Anno 1640.

"And thus the Lord led them by his Spirit in a way and path that they knew not, having called them *out of darkness into his* marvelous light by Jesus Christ our Lord."

In 1640 five persons met, and "with godly purpose of heart [they] joined themselves together in the Lord; only thus covenanting, That they would, in the strength and assistance of the Lord, come forth of the world, and

[1] "The Records of a Church of Christ Meeting in Broadmead, Bristol, 1640–1687." Hanserd Knollys Society. London. 1847. P. 17.

worship the Lord more purely, persevering therein to their end."

An "implicite" covenant, or rather informal agreement, evidently was used by those Baptists who separated in 1641 from Mr. Jessey's church in London. This covenant was "manifested," not made with any set form of expression, for some scrupled at the word "covenant," but all testified "by mutual desires and agreement" that they would organize a church together. The record says:[1] "Those Persons y^t^ ware persuaded Baptism should be by dipping y^e^ Body had mett in two Companies, & did intend so to meet after this, all these agreed to proceed alike togeather. And then Manifesting (not by any formal Words a Covenant) w^ch^ word was scrupled by some of them, but by mutual desires & agreement each Testified: Those two Companyes did set apart one to Baptize the rest; So it was solemnly performed by them."

The Broadmead Bristol Covenant of 1645.

The next Baptist covenant of importance is the strictly Separatist renewed Broadmead covenant of 1645. The "Records" read:[2]

Anno 1645.

And being thus, as it were, in a chaos of confusion, by reason of those several that did not cleave to their former received principles, . . [they] began again to new model themselves, and to separate from these disturbers; . . Thus having taken the

[1] In the Gould MS., No. 2, entitled "An Old MSS, giveing some Acco^tt^ of those Baptists who first formed themselves into distinct Congregations, or Churches in London. found among certain Paper given me by M^r^ Adams."

[2] Pp. 31, 32.

names of such that again gave up themselves to the duties and privileges of such that were called to be saints, they entered into a covenant that was very briefly written in a paper, and read unto them, to this effect—"That they would, in the strength of Christ, keep close to the holy scriptures, the Word of God; and [to] the plain truths and ordinances of the gospel, of church fellowship, breaking bread, and prayers; and to [be] subject to one another, according to the discipline and admonition [commanded] by the rules of Christ, in the New Testament, or the scriptures."

And so having now by a new embodying of themselves again, and, as it were, renewing their covenant with God, and [with] one another, they went on in the ways of the Lord.

Baptist churches were founded at an early date in Fenstanton and Warboys, but their records give no evidence of the use of covenants in these churches, at least at any early period. When, however, some years later, the Baptist church in Hexham was organized, on the "21st day of the 5th month," 1652, a covenant certainly was used, as is shown by the phraseology of the following entries in the "Records":

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HEXHAM.

Thomas Tillam, minister, and a messenger of one of seven churches in London, did administer the holy ordinance of baptism, in the name . . . to . . .

These, solemnly giving up themselves to the Lord and one to another, to walk in communion together, with submission to all ordinances of the gospel, I, Tho. Tillam, espoused to one husband; hoping that I shall present them a chaste virgin to Christ, with all that in sincerity of heart, have (through the mighty power of God), or shall be, joined to them.[1]

The names of our members who are remaining, and [who] entered into a covenant to be the Lord's, are[2]:—

[1] "Records of the Churches of Christ," gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys, and Hexham. 1644–1770. London, 1854. Hanserd Knollys Society. Pp. 289, 290.

[2] P. 299.

The Baptist Church in Leominster,[1] Herefordshire, also evidently was organized by a very informal covenant, for the Church Book begins with the following Minute, viz:

The 25th of the 7th Month 1656 The Church of Christ meeting at Brother Ioseph Patshalls House in Leominster was Constituted & the Persons undernamed did after Solemn Seeking of God by Prayer, give up themselves to the Lord, & to each other to Walk together in all the Ordinances of Iesus Christ according to his appointments, which was done in the presence of our Brother Daniell King & other Brethren.

In the Gould MS.[2] is given the substance of the following Baptist covenant of the date 1656.

The Longworth Baptist Covenant.

The account of the organization of the Longworth church reads in part:

At A meeting ye 12th of ye 10th month 1656, when the Church at Longworth did first stand upp as a Church of Christ distinct from Abingdon Church.

That those members in & neare Longworth togather with our Brother Combes being still pswaded twill most tend to the Glory of God that wee stand upp as a distinct Church of Christ or Bro: Combes being to walke with us so long as himself shall be pswaded that his call from ye Lord is to be amongst us to be at present upon triall to see how ye Lord will owne his labour amongst us.

This being Resolved upon by us whose names are underwritten doe in the presence of the Lord give upp ourselves to ye Lord and to each other to walke togather as members of a Church of Christ watching over each other for good to walke in all the ordinances of Christ as the Lord shall give us Light, strength and opptunity.

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[1] See Josiah Thompson's "Hist. of Protestant Dissenting Congregations," 1772. Vol. II., Herefordshire. No. 4, Leominster.

[2] Next to the last section in the volume, unnumbered.

The Covenant of the Church at Hitchin.

The covenant of the Baptist church at Hitchin, renewed Oct. 25, 1681, and probably employed at the organization of the church about 1660, has been preserved [1] by the Rev. Joseph Ivimey in the following words:

It appears to have been common for the churches then, as with some at present [*circa* 1814], to have *covenants*, to which every person subscribed as the condition of membership. This was the case with this church, as we are informed that on October 25, 1681, "The church being met together at Hitchin, at brother Thomas Field's house, and so fully that very few were absent, did then renew their covenant to the Lord, and one to another, with fasting and prayer, not contradicting, but by silence and lifting up their hands declared their freeness and heartiness therein."

The Covenant is as followeth and thus propounded:

We who through the mercy of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have obtained grace to give ourselves to the Lord, and one to another by the will of God to have communion one with another as saints in our gospel fellowship. Do, before God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy angels, agree and promise, all of us (the Lord assisting) to walk together in this our gospel communion and fellowship, as a church of Jesus Christ in love to the Lord, and one to another, and endeavor to yield sincere and hearty obedience to the laws, ordinances and appointments of our Lord and Lawgiver in his church.

And also do agree and promise (the Lord assisting) to follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby the one may edify another: that so loving and walking together in peace, the God of Love and Peace may be with us. Amen.

To which we had the universal consent and Amen of all.

The Records of the Baptist church in Kettering indicate that it was organized by use of about the simplest covenant possible. For in some manuscript, "Extracts | from | The Church Book | Belonging to | The Baptist Church at Kettering," copied for Taylor and

[1] "A History of the English Baptists," London, 1811–1830, 4 vols. Vol. II., pp. 195, 196.

Son, Northampton, in September, 1871, the first entry reads simply :

"An Account off the names off those who are in the church ffellowsship att Kettering & haue ingaged to walk together according to the rules off the gospell under the ministry off M^r. Maydwell pastour there Kittering."

That the covenant idea, however, gained favor in this church may be seen from the fact that later in the Church Book[1] the text of a very long undated covenant is given ; a few pages farther on[2] is an abstract of this last covenant, dated Dec. 15, 1723 ; and just beyond[3] is a short covenant of eight or ten lines, dated "5 of november 1729."

It seems probable that the Particular Baptists in England favored the use of a church covenant more than the General Baptists, but formal covenants were evidently not general among English Baptists as a whole at any time. The covenant[4] employed at the constitution of the Particular Baptist church at Horsley-down, of which Benjamin Keach later became pastor, according to his "Short Confession of Faith" of 1697, was the following :

The Solemn Covenant of the Church at its Constitution.

We who desire to walk together in the Fear of the Lord, do, through the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, profess our deep and serious Humiliation for all our Transgressions. And we do also solemnly, in the Presence of

[1] Pp. 31 plus. [2] Pp. 35 plus. [3] P. 39 plus.

[4] "A Short Confession of Faith, Containing the Substance Of all the Fundamental Articles In The Larger Confession, put forth by the Elders of the Baptized churches, Owning Personal Election and Final Perseverance." London. 1697. [This was the Confession of the Baptist Church at Horsley-down.] Pp. 71–74. Principal Gould's Private Collection. Regent's Park College.

God, of each other, in the Sense of our own Vnworthiness, give up our selves to the Lord, in a Church state according to the Apostolical Constitution that he may be our God, and we may be his People, through the Everlasting Covenant of his Free grace, in which alone we hope to be accepted by him, through his blessed Son Jesus Christ, whom we take to be our High Priest, to justify and sanctify us, and our Prophet to teach us; and to [be] subject to him as our Law-giver, and the King of Saints; and to conform to all his Holy Laws and Ordinances, for our growth, Establishment, and Consolation; that we may be as a Holy Spouse unto him, and serve him in our Generation, and wait for his second Appearance, as our glorious Bridegroom.

Being fully satisfied in the way of Church-Communion, and the Truth of Grace in some good measure upon one anothers Spirits, we do solemnly join our selves together in a Holy Vnion and Fellowship, humbly submitting to the Discipline of the Gospel, and all Holy Duties required of a People in such a spiritual Relation.

1. We do promise and ingage to walk in all Holiness, Godliness, Humility, and Brotherly Love, as much as in us lieth to render our Communion delightful to God, comfortable to our selves, and lovely to the rest of the Lord's People.

2. We do promise to watch over each others Conversations, and not to suffer Sin upon one another, so far as God shall discover it to us, or any of us; and to stir up one another to Love and good Works; to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another with Meekness, according to the Rules left to us of Christ in that Behalf.

3. We do promise in an especial manner to pray for one another, and for the Glory and Increase of this Church, and for the Presence of God in it, and the pouring forth of his Spirit on it, and his Protection over it to his Glory.

4. We do promise to bear one anothers Burdens, to cleave to one another, and to have a Fellow-feeling with

one another, in all Conditions both outward and inward, as God in his Providence shall cast any of us into

5. We do promise to bear with one anothers Weakness, Failings, and Infirmities, with much Tenderness, not discovering to any without the Church, nor any within, unless according to Christ's Rule, and the Order of the Gospel provided in that case.

6. We do promise to strive together for the Truths of the Gospel, and Purity of God's Ways and Ordinances, to avoid Causes, and Causers of Division, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; Ephes. 4 3.

7. We do promise to meet together on Lord's Days, and at other times, as the Lord shall give us Opportunities, to serve and glorify God in the way of his Worship, to edify one another, and to contrive the good of his Church.

8. We do promise according to our Ability (or as God shall bless us with the good things of this World) to Communicate to our Pastor or Minister, God having ordained that they that Preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. (And now can any thing lay a greater obligation upon the Conscience, than this Covenant, what then is the Sin of such who violate it?)

These and all other Gospel-Duties we humbly submit unto, promising and purposing to perform, not in our own Strength, being conscious of our own Weakness, but in the Power and Strength of the Blessed God, whose we are, and whom we desire to serve: To whom be Glory now and for evermore. Amen.

At least some of the churches of the "Barkshire Association," [1] (composed of the Baptist churches at "Abingdon, Wantage, Newberry, Reading, Farringdon, Coate, and Witney") employed a covenant, for in the record of a meeting of the "Messengers" of these congregations held at Abingdon, September 3, 1708, "Direction

[1] There is a copy of the Records of the Barkshire Association in "the Gould MS."

4" reads: "let us see that according to our solemn Covenants & ingagements we Readily and Chearfully submit to y^e^ supreme authority of Christ in his Church."

Two of these churches at least were organized about the middle of the seventeenth century. That at Abingdon was in existence as early as 1652, and probably before, but what the text of its covenant was we do not know. However, it is probable that this church was formed by the use of a simple covenant, inasmuch as the church at Longworth, formed in 1656 by members of the church at Abingdon, employed a covenant at its organization, the text of which has already been given. The church at Farringdon was formed in 1657, when "y^e^ members [of the church at Longworth?] in & about Farringdon were . . . solemnly given up to walke as a pticular Congregation of Iesus Christ." This record probably implies the use of an informal covenant.

The Covenant of the Baptist Church at Great Gransden.

The story of the evolution of a Baptist church at Great Gransden and of its organization by use of a covenant is worthy of study, for thereby it may indubitably be shown that members of Baptist churches which had grown out of Congregational churches, at least sometimes, did continue to employ the covenants they had formerly used in the churches from which they had come. An account of the formation of the Baptist church in Great Gransden, given by Mr. Thompson,[1] reads:

[1] "History of Protestant Dissenting Congregations," Vol. II. Huntingdonshire, No. 2.

One of Mr. Holcrafts Societies used to meet at Clapton Cum Croyden & after his Decease in 1694 formed themselves into a Separate Congregational Church by Signing the Covenant mentioned under Cambridgeshire. This covenant reads as follows :

We do in the presence of the Lord Jesus the awful crowned King of Sion and in the presence of his holy angels and people, and all beside here present Solemnly give up ourselves to the Lord and to one another by the will of God, solemnly promising & engaging in the aforesaid presence to walk with the Lord, and with one another in the observation of all Gospel Ordinances and the discharge of all relative duties in this Church of God, & Elsewhere as the Lord shall enlighten and enable us.

Subscribed by A B C D &c.

Fifteen Names are Subscribed. This Church had continual Meetings at Clapton or at Croyden & often Renewed Covenant & kept days of Fasting & Prayer, Their Numbers Increasing till April 8th 1703 when they chose for their Pastor Mr Iabez Conder who Administered the Lord's Supper to them on the 11th of the Sumer Month, Mr Conder Died about the year 1724 & Ianuary 1725 the Church Renewed Covenant & was found to consist of Near 30 Members, these continued in their Church State and were Supplied by Several Ministers till Iune 22:nd 1732 when they Removed the Seat of the Church from *Croyden* to Great Grunsden & on Oct 10th called to Pastoral office from the Church at Evershall in Northamptonshire Mr Benjamin Dutton at a Church Meeting on the 5th of August 1733 it appeared that the Members who were now only 16 were all Baptists & it was Unanimously agreed to form themselves into a Strict Baptist Church, Septr 5th 1733 the Church Met & the Pastor having Assigned Several Reasons for their Practice Read 12 Articles of Faith which himself & all the Members Subscribed as they did also the old Covenant to which had been added a Clause declaring that for the future none Should be admitted without Signing the Articles & agreeing to Baptism by Immersion.

The following interesting document[1] is the covenant used at the organization of the Baptist Church at

[1] From the original copy now in possession of the Congregational Library, London, and by the courtesy of the present librarian, Rev. T. G. Crippen.

"Bourton on the Water," in January, 1719–20. Before this time those who formed the church had been members of an Open-Communion congregation, but now reorganized as a Close-Communion church. To-day the church seems to have returned to its earlier belief on the Communion question. The well-known Benjamin Beddome was once pastor of this congregation.

We whose Names are underwritten having been Members & much the Major Part of a Church or Seperate Congregation late under the Pastoral Care of the Rev^{d}. M^{r}. Ioshua Head dec^{d}. is still desirous to walk together in all the Ordinances of Iesus Christ, as much as may be, blameless. (seing that Church by reason of different apprehensions of some of the Brethren about the Choice of a Pastour; hath been, in the presence, & by the Advice of some neighbouring Ministers, peaceably dissolv'd) do now freely & heartily give up our selves afresh to God the Father & his Only Son our Lord & Lawgiver; & to one another according to his Will. And so becoming a new Church or Sacred Society incorporated by the Gospel Charter, do now in the presence of God & those that are here Witnesses of our Order unanimously agree in the Name & fear of Christ

1.st That we will, to the utmost of our Power, walk together in one Body, & as near as may be with one Mind, in all sweetness of Spirit, and saint like Love to each other, as highly becomes the Disciples of Christ

John 15. 12, 14
Rom: 13. 8
Ephes. 5. 2
1 Thes: 3. 12
1 Joh: 4. 21

2.^{dly} That we will jointly contend, & strive together for the Faith & Purity of the Gospel, the Truths of Iesus Christ, & the Order, Ordinances, Honour, Liberty, & Priviledges of this his Church against all Opposers

Iude 3
Gal. 5. 1, 13
2 Tim. 1. 13
Rev: 2. 25

3.^{dly} That we will with all care, Diligence, & Conscience labour & study, to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace,

Phil^{p} 2. 1–3
1 Cor 1. 10
Ephes 4. 3

2 Cor 13. 11

both in the Church in general, & in particular between one another

4.thly That we will carefully avoid all Causes & Causers of Divisions as much as lyes in us, & shun those that are Seducers & false Preachers of Errours & Heresies

2 Joh. 10
1 Tim 6. 3
Rev 2. 14, 20

5.thly That we will sympathize & have a fellow feeling (to our power) with one another in every Condition, & endeavour to bear each others Burthens, where we are joyfull or sorrowfull tempted or otherwise, that we may be mutual Helps to one another, & so answer the End of our near Relation

Gal 6. 2
Heb 13. 3
1 Cor 12. 25
2 Tim 1. 16

6.thly That we will forbear, & bear w.th one anothers weaknesses & Infirmities in much Pity, Tenderness, Meekness, & Patience not daring to rip up the weakness of any to those without the Church, nor to those that are within, unless it be according to Christ's Rule & Gospel Order, endeavouring all we can for the Glory of the Gospel, & for the Credit of this Church willing to cover & hide one anothers Slips & common failings that are not sinfull

Ephes 4. 2
Rom 14. 13 & 15. 1
Col 3. 12
1 Cor 13. 4, 7

7.thly That we will, as our God shall enable us, cleave fast to each other to the utmost of our power; & that if perilous Times should come, & a Time of Persecution (which God for our nonproficiency may justly send) we will not dare to draw back from our holy profession, but will endeavour to strengthen one anothers hands, & encourage one another to Perseverance, let what will fall to our Lot

Heb 10: 23 to the end
2 Tim 4. 10 & 16

8.thly We do promise to keep the Secrets of our Church entire without divulging them to any that are not Members of this particular Body, tho' they may be otherwise near & dear to us; for we believe the Church ought to be as a Garden enclosed & a fountain sealed

Cant 4. 12
Prov. 11. 13
1 Tim 5. 13

9.thly Those of us that are or may be single persons do fully design never to enter into conjugal Bonds with any that are Unbelievers for we believe it to be a Sin to be unequally yoked, that it is contrary to the Rule of Christ, & the ready way to hinder our souls peace, growth, & eternal Wellfare

2 Cor 6 14 to the End
1 Cor 7. 39
Mal 2. 10
Ezra 9. 2
Nehem 13. 23 to the 27
Gen: 6. 2, 3

10.thly That we will communicate to one another of the good Things of this Life, as God hath or may prosper us, so far as our Ability will suffer, or any of our Necessities shall be thought to require

Heb 13. 26
2 Cor 9 1 chap. 8. 7
1 Joh: 3. 17

11.thly That we will endeavour to watch over one anothers conversation for Good, not for each others halting, yet so as not by any means to suffer sin to rest in the bosom of our Brother but to remove it by using all possible Means to bring the person to repentance & Reformation of Life; & that we will endeavour to provoke one another to Holiness, Love, & good Works

Lev 19. 17
Gal 6. 1
Heb 10. 24

12.thly We do all purpose constantly to attend the Meetings appointed by the Church, both on the Lord's days & other Days, nothing hindring except Distances, sickness, or the Works of Mercy & Necessity

Heb 10. 25
Acts 2. 42, 46

13.thly That We will make Conscience of praying for one anothers Wellfare at all times, but especially in Time of Distress, as Poverty Sickness, Pain, Temptation, Desertion, or the like; & that we will pray for the Peace & Growth of the whole Church in general & for our Ministers & the success of their Ministry in an especial manner

1 Cor 12. 26
2 Thes 3. 1, 2
Rom 12. 15
Acts 12. 12
1 Thes 5. 25

Signed at Bourton on the Water
the 30.th day of Ianuary 1719–20

[Eighty-two marks and names.]

In England from the first the Baptists evidently did not lay so much emphasis on the use of a covenant in the formation of their churches as did the Independents. In many cases, however, our sources of information are so meagre that no definite answer can be obtained as to whether certain Baptist churches employed a covenant. For instance, in regard to the Baptist congregation in Bath, Somersetshire, Josiah Thompson can say merely :[1]

> The latter End of the Year 1744 a few of them met together in a private House on a Lords Day for the Purposed religious Worship. In 1747 they took an upper Room in Kingsmead Square which was opened by M^r^ Hugh Evans of Bristol & an Evening Lecture was supplied & kept up by y^e^ Bristol Ministers of this Denomination. Here they continued for a Year and half & then removed to a more convenient Room fitted up in Collets Back Yard Horse Street where they continued several Years, & were Supplied by a Variety of Ministers from Bristol, Bradford, & elsewhere. August 1752 they formed themselves into a regular Church consisting of nine Members, soon after which they had six Persons added to them who were baptized at Paulton.

The Particular Baptist Church at Hail Weston, which was organized at Little Stoughton, Bedfordshire, on "June 14: 1757," doubtless used a covenant from the beginning, but its records were not kept till 1802, when the account[2] for the preceding fifty years was made up. In this were "recorded also the form of their church-covenant [the church covenant used in 1802 probably], the form of admission to fellowship with the church, and the Articles of their faith." The first of these docu-

1 "History of Protestant Dissenting Congregations." Vol. IV. Somersetshire.

2 "Some Account of the Nonconformist Churches at Hail Weston and St. Neots." By Joseph Rix. 1855. Vol. V., pp. 45, 46. Doctor Williams' Library, London.

ments, with a few verbal exceptions, corresponds with the covenant adopted by the dissenting church at Kimbolton in 1692.

The Church Covenant.

We do in the awful presence of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Crowned King of Zion, and in the presence of his Holy Angels, and the presence of his people, and all besides here present, solemnly give up ourselves to the Lord, and one another by the will of God, Solemnly promising and Engaging in the aforesaid awful presence to walk to-gether with the Lord, and one another, in the observation of all Gospel ordinances, and in the Discharg of all Relative Duties, in this Church of God, and elsewhere, as the Lord Shall Enlighten and Enable us.

The Form of Admission.

if you now Brother (or Sister) in the awful presence of god, of the Lord Jesus Christ, of his holy angels, of his people, and all besidse here present, do give up yourself unto the Lord and unto us his people, by the will of god, Solemnly promising and Engaging, in the aforesaid awful presence, to walk with god, and us his Church and people, as the Lord Shall Enable and Enlighten you, Signify it by lifting up your Right hand to the Lord,

we likewise in the aforesaid awful presence do Receive you into our Communion, Solemnly promising and Engaging to Carry it towards you as a Church of Christ, watching over you in the Lord,

in testimony whereof we give you the Right hand of fellowshipe wishing your Coming into this Church may be with a Bllesing unto us and you.

It may be remarked here that this covenant with the "Form of Admission" is not only practically the same as that of the church at Kimbolton, adopted in 1692, but

is also, with the change of a few words, the same as that used by the Congregationalist church at Bassingtown about 1655, while the covenant, it will be remembered, was used by the Baptist church at Great Gransden at its organization in 1733. Here, then, is a covenant whose history we can trace, in part at least, for nearly one hundred and fifty years. It was originally a Congregational covenant, but in the course of time was adopted by a Baptist church as a document suited to its uses. It may be noticed further that the form of admission is of the same general type as the covenant of the First Congregational Church in Chelsea, Mass., of the date 1875, to which reference will be made later.

These various documents which have been quoted must suffice to show how extensively the covenant idea was made use of by English Baptists. It evidently was never very popular with them as a body, but during the eighteenth century more Baptist churches in England seem to have employed a covenant than before or since. Certainly a church covenant was never generally used in the organization of English Baptist churches of any particular period, and years ago cases of the churches in which the covenant was used were "very rare." [1] Indeed, apparently, to some modern English Baptists the term "covenant" has no significance in connection with a Baptist church. Indeed, it probably may truly be said that in general the church covenant idea among English Baptists is gradually sinking, or has already sunk, into oblivion.

[1] So says Principal George P. Gould, Regent's Park College, London, in a letter to the author.

CHAPTER XI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH COVENANT IDEA IN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONAL AND BAPTIST CHURCHES SINCE 1640

BETWEEN 1630 and 1640 about twenty thousand Englishmen had been transported to the shores of Massachusetts Bay, and by 1646 over fifty-two Congregational churches had been founded in New England.[1]

The long discussion, to which reference has been made, as to what was the proper gospel church polity, gradually developed into the great controversy among the pastors of the New England Congregational churches themselves, later called the "Half-Way Covenant Controversy," which lasted till the middle of the eighteenth century and even longer. Though half-way covenants did not admit to the privileges of full communion, yet the controversy was of so great importance and had so enduring an effect on the Congregational churches of America that the Half-Way Covenant idea and the circumstances which led to its adoption may not be passed over in silence.

The Half-Way Covenant Idea.

It has been shown by various modern writers that the Brownists or Independents must have obtained some of

[1] See Professor Walker's "Creeds and Platforms," p. 174, and note 2.

their ideas through Anabaptist influences. At least one early controversial writer also suggested that Browne's Separatist plan might lead to Anabaptist views.[1] In history it did this and more, for Robert Browne had embodied in his ideas on church polity one radical inconsistency. He would have a Separatist church formed only of believers, and yet the children of these believers must not be left outside of the covenant promises. This, on the one hand, led many thoughtful Independents in the course of time again to separate into churches composed solely of believers, or, at least, to seek baptism on profession of faith;[2] on the other hand, in New England it caused many churches to find themselves in the greatest embarrassment, after the lapse of forty or fifty years, because children of church-members, who had been baptized and had been considered to be truly members of the church, as having shared in their parents' covenanting, had grown up without any religious experience, and therefore could not be admitted to the rights of full church-membership. If the churches should continue in this condition another generation it

[1] In "A Plaine | Refutation | of M. Giffards Booke, | intituled, A short treatise | gainst the Donatistes of | England," etc., "By Henry Barrowe," p. 65, occurs such a suggestion: "At length he [probably Mr. Giffard] hath found out a merueylous knot in a rush, and of the same made such a snare for his *Brownistes*, as they must needes *either confesse the baptisme of their* CHURCH *to be a signe of the couenant. And so they all from their ancestors and their whole Church are within the couenant, or ells if they deny it, fal into the heresie of the Catabaptistes* [Anabaptists], *and make themselues also without the couenant or ells to haue a couenant without seales.*"

[2] In confirmation of this, see the following statement by the Rev. John Lewis, "Minister of Mergate," in a "Brief History of the English Anabaptists, March 1, 1741," p. 42 (MS. in Bodleian Library, Oxford, Press mark, Rawlinson C. 409). "It is certain that here in *England* the Barrowists or Independents were wonderfully pleased with this Novelty, and flocked in great numbers to the *Jordans* of the Anabaptists, and hundreds of Men and Women together were baptized by going into rivulets and arms of the River Thames, and there having their Heads dipped into the Water."

was thought they would be greatly weakened in power and, indeed, be in a pitiable state.

Yet certainly they would not turn for rescue to the Baptists whose baptism on profession of faith they had spurned, and thus lay open their full indebtedness to Anabaptist principles. It seemed preferable to them to have two kinds of members, full members and partial members, of whom the latter would share some of the benefits of the covenant in which their parents had engaged, but could not vote or participate in the Lord's Supper. Such double membership was made possible by the use of what came appropriately to be known as the "Half-Way Covenant." By this unregenerate men could continue to have partial connection with the church and might have their children baptized.

Half-Way covenants, however, never came to be adopted by all Congregational churches, but individual pastors made and employed them at their own pleasure, in some cases before the churches themselves had expressed approval. A ministerial convention, composed of sixteen or seventeen pastors, held in Boston in 1657, supported the Half-Way view. In 1662, also, a synod was held at Boston, where practically the same conclusions were reached. From that time on till the early part of the nineteenth century Half-Way covenants were used in the great majority of the New England Congregational churches. By the first quarter of the eighteenth century even unregenerate persons of unblamable character, who had not been born in religious families, might "own" the Half-Way covenant and have their children baptized. Nor was this all, but by the spread of what was known as "Stoddardeanism" in western

Massachusetts and Connecticut, it became "the duty of all who were sincerely desirous of living a Christian life, and who were church-members by birth, even though not consciously regenerate, to partake of the Lord's Supper." [1]

In 1749 Jonathan Edwards began to set his influence against this low ideal of church-membership, which he himself for twenty years seems to have favored. Other able men followed his lead, with so good result that the Half-Way practice was given up entirely in Congregational churches after 1828.

In President Edwards' time evidently a regular form of Half-Way covenant had come to be used by Congregational churches in America. It has even been said [2] that Jonathan Edwards himself probably "approved and administered that form of it [the Half-Way covenant] then generally current among the churches."

This was very likely true before 1749, for we know that President Edwards "[16–27 March, 1741–2] administered a most solemn covenant—so minute in its terms as to contain one thousand five hundred and sixty-eight words, and to occupy four closely printed octavo pages—to his 'Congregation in general, that were above fourteen Years of Age'; one specification of which bound them to examine themselves strictly, 'especially before the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.'" [3]

One of the best examples of a Half-Way covenant is that of one of the Boston churches, which reads as follows: [4]

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[1] Professor Walker's "Creeds and Platforms," p. 280.

[2] See Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 487 and note.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 481 and note.

[4] "Magnalia," 1820, Vol. V., pp. 268, 269. Cited from an earlier edition in Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 476, note.

You now from your heart professing a serious belief to the christian religion, as it has been generally declared and embraced by the faithful in this place, do here give up yourself to God in Christ; promising with his help to endeavour, to walk according to the rules of that holy religion, all your days; choosing of God as your best good, and your last end, and Christ as the Prophet, and Priest, and the king of your soul forever. You do therefore submit unto the laws of his kingdom, as they are administered in this church of his; and you will also carefully and sincerely labour after those more positive and increased evidences of regeneration, which may further encourage you to seek an admission unto the table of the Lord.

Two other examples of Half-Way covenants are that of the Salem church, preserved in the Direction of 1665, and that used by the First Church in Hartford in 1696. The texts of these covenants are as follows:

The Salem Half-Way Covenant.[1]

I do heartily take and avouch this one God who is made known to us in the Scripture, by the Name of God the Father, and God the Son even Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Ghost to be my God, according to the tenour of the Covenant of Grace; wherein he hath promised to be a God to the Faithfull and their seed after them in their Generations, and taketh them to be his People, and therefore unfeignedly repenting of all my sins, I do give up myself wholly unto this God to believe in love, serve & Obey him sincerely and faithfully according to his written word, against all the temptations of the Devil, the World, and my own flesh and this unto the death.

I do also consent to be a Member of this particular Church, promising to continue stedfastly in fellowship

[1] Text from Professor Walker's "Creeds and Platforms," p.121.

with it, in the publick Worship of God, to submit to the Order Discipline and Government of Christ in it, and to the Ministerial teaching guidance and oversight of the Elders of it, and to the brotherly watch of Fellow Members: and all this according to Gods Word, and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ enabling me thereunto. AMEN.

THE HARTFORD HALF-WAY COVENANT OF 1696.[1]

We do solemnly in y^e^ presence of God and this Congregation avouch God in Jesus Christ to be our God one God in three persons y^e^ Father y^e^ Son & y^e^ Holy Ghost & y^t^ we are by nature childr^n^ of wrath & y^t^ our hope of Mercy with God is only thro' y^e^ righteousnesse of Jesus Christ apprehended by faith & we do freely give up ourselves to y^e^ Lord to walke in communion with him in y^e^ ordinances appointed in his holy word & to yield obedience to all his comands & submit to his governm^t^ & whereas to y^e^ great dishon^r^ of God, Scandall of Religion & hazard of y^e^ damnation of Souls, y^e^ Sins of drunkenness & fornication are Prevailing amongst us we do Solemnly engage before God this day thro his grace faithfully and conscientiously to strive against those Evills and y^e^ temptations that May lead thereto.

Concerning these last two Half-Way covenants Professor Walker says:[2] "Like this Salem *Direction* the Hartford covenant was not formally adopted by the church, though prepared by its pastor and used by its services. For a century, at Hartford, each pastor wrote his own form."

[1] For text see "*Church records*, G. L. Walker, *Hist.* First *Ch. in Hartford*, Hartford, 1884, p. 248." Also given in Prof. Williston Walker's "Creeds and Platforms," p. 121, note 1.

[2] P. 121, note.

So much concerning Half-Way covenants. We may now pass to a consideration of the development of regular church covenants among Congregationalists and Baptists in America since 1640.

Attention here may be called to the fact that in early American history almost the only known, or recognized, method of forming a church was by covenant. Hence, at the organization of Baptist churches it is to be expected that in New England at least, after 1640, some form of covenant generally was employed. Such seems to have been the case. This circumstance, with the fact that Baptist churches always have been closely related to those of the Congregationalists, leads us naturally to study the covenant development in these two denominations in America not separately, but in comparison.

Between 1640 and 1663 there seem to have been but few and unsatisfactory attempts at forming Baptist churches. Whether these employed covenants is not known. But in 1663 a Baptist church was organized at Swansea, Massachusetts, of which the covenant fortunately has been preserved. The history of the Swansea church is very interesting, for it goes back to the Baptist church formed at Ilston in Glamorganshire, Wales, Oct. 1, 1649. This church had been blessed with considerable prosperity, when, August 24, 1662, an Act of Parliament was passed ejecting from the country such persons as did not conform to the Church of England. Among those ejected was the pastor of this church, Rev. John Myles, who, with some of his most ardent followers, came to America. They brought with them their church records, and "at Mr. Butterworth's house in Rehoboth, in 1663, John Miles, elder, James Brown, Nicholas Tanner, Joseph

Carpenter, John Butterworth, Eldad Kingsley, and Benjamin Alby joined in a solemn covenant together." [1] A few months later they made a settlement and organized their church [2] in what is now the town of Swansea, Mass.

[1] Backus' "History of the Baptists of New England," Vol. I., p. 284.

[2] The records of the Swansea church were written into the old Welsh record book. In Vol. II., p. 24, of his History, Backus tells us that in 1718 the records from 1663 to 1718 were stolen and had not been recovered in his day. But even this loss evidently did not lead the church to be particularly careful of its treasure, for only as long ago as 1868 the old record book had disappeared so entirely from view that the church-members could nowhere locate it. Carelessness evidently had finally caused its loss forever. But fortunately through the researches of Hon. Thomas W. Bicknell, now of Providence, R. I., the old book was once more brought to light, and is now in possession of the Baptist church located in North Swansea. The story of its recovery as given by Mr. Bicknell in a letter to the author is interesting.

About the year 1868 Mr. Bicknell was engaged in writing a series of historical articles on ancient Swansea. When he came to discuss John Myles and his church, Mr. Bicknell was compelled to stop in his work for want of material, as records neither of church nor town could be found. But believing that such material was still in existence, through information from General Fessenden, author of a History of Warren, R. I., he wrote to the widow of Judge Bosworth, of Warren, R. I., then dead several years, who had in his lifetime been considerably interested in historical matters. Mrs. Bosworth replied that most of the Judge's law books "had been sold and distributed, but that there were several boxes of [his] books in the loft of a meat market at Warren." She said when she returned East she would inform him and they would examine the boxes. "On her return, I think in the year 1869," says Mr. Bicknell, "I went with Mrs. B—— to Warren, found the boxes, pried open the top box with a butcher's hatchet, and the first package we took up, wrapped in brown paper, was marked 'Old Swansea Records,' 'To be returned to the Town Clerk.'" "Here were the town records of old Swansea from the settlement of the town, with only a few pages gone. And in one of the books I found the Church Covenant and other matter relating to Myles and his historic church."

Through the kindness of the Rev. L. Drury, lately pastor of the church in North Swansea, it is possible to give here some account of the old Welsh record book and its contents, as well as the accompanying copy of the covenant. He says: "The record book brought from Wales and still in possession of the church contains about 500 pages of about the size of a foolscap page. It is bound in pigskin, not tanned like leather, but" having "the appearance of raw hide. The first entry is a list of members of the church in Wales, with this heading:

"'1650.

"'The names of the Brethren & Sisters that were added to this Church from the first of 8 Mo: 1649 to this Sixteenth of the same Mo: 1650.' John Myles heads the list, which contains two hundred sixty-one names with their places of residence. After this are church records amounting to about twenty closely written pages, the last entry being in 1659."

The records from 1663 to 1718 have never yet been recovered, and probably long since were destroyed. The above copy of the covenant is written just before an entry under the date 1718, and Mr. Drury thinks it likely that it was copied into the records about that time. The covenant follows nearly fifty pages of letters written and received by the church in Wales. The Welsh records make no mention of a covenant. After 1718 the records continue to 1842.

The Swansea Church Covenant.
"Swanzey" in New England.

"A true coppy of the Holy Covenant the first founders of Swanzey entered into at the first beginning and all the members thereof for Divers years."

Whereas we Poor Creatures are through the exceeding Riches of Gods Infinite Grace Mercifully Snatched out of the Kingdom of darkness and by his Infinite Power translated into the Kingdom of his dear Son there to be partakers with all Saints of all those Privileges which Christ by the shedding of his Precious Blood hath purchased for us and that we do find our souls in some good measure wrought on by Divine Grace to desire to be found conformable to Christ in all things being also constrained by the matchless love and wonderfull Distinguishing mercies that we Abundantly Injoy from his most free grace to serve him according to our utmost capasities and that we also know that it is our most bounden Duty to walk in visible communion with Christ and each other according to the Prescript Rule of his most holy word and also that it is our Undoubted Right through Christ to Injoy all the Privileges of Gods House which our souls have for a long time panted after And finding no other way at present by the allworking Providence of our only wise God & gracious Father to us opened for the Injoyment of the same We do therefore after often & solemn seeking to the Lord for help and Direction in the fear of his holy Name and with hands lifted up to him the most high God Humbly and freely offer up ourselves this day a Living sacrifice unto him who is our God in Covenant through Christ our Lord and only Saviour to walk together according to his revealed word in visible Gospel Relation both to Christ our only head and to each other as fellow members and Brethren and of the same Household of faith And we do Humbly Ingage that through his strength we will henceforth Indeavour to

Perform all our Respective Duties toward God and each other and to practice all the ordinances of Christ according to what is or shall be revealed to us In our Respective Places to Exercise Practice and Submit to the Government of Christ in this his Church : viz :

furder Protesting against all Rending and Dividing Principles or Practices from any of the People of God as being most abomidable and loathsome to our souls & utterly Inconsistent with that Christian Charity which declares men to be Christs Disciples Indeed further declaring that as Union in Christ is the sole ground of our Communion each with other so we are Ready to accept of Receive too & hold Communion with all such as by a judgment of Charity we conceive to be fellow members with us in our head Christ Jesus tho Differing from us in such Controversal Points as are not absolutely and essencially Necessary to Salvation we also hope that though of ourselves we are altogether unworthy and unfit thus to offer up ourselves to God or to do him x x x[1] [a] or to expect any favor with or mercy from him x x x[1] [He] will Graciously accept of this our free will offering in and through the merit and mediation of our Dear Redeemer And that he will Imploy and Improve us in his service to his Praise to whom be all Glory & Hon[r] now and forever Amen.

After about a page of comments, evidently made by the copyist and his fellows, occurs the following item :

The Names of the Parsons that first Joyned themselves in the Covenant aforesaid as a Church of Christ.

Iohn Miles Elder	Iohn Butterworth
Iames Brown	Eldad Kingsley
Nicholis Tanner	Benjamin Alby
Ioseph Carpenter	

[1] The crosses in the text of the covenant indicate words made illegible by frequent handling, but supplied at the bottom of the page. The words in brackets after the crosses are the words probably to be supplied.

Another of the oldest Baptist churches in America is the First Baptist church of Boston, Mass., formed in Charlestown, May 28, 1665 (old style), or June 7, 1665 (new style). The founders of the church, according to the old records,[1] were Thomas Gold, Thomas Osbourne, Edward Drinker, John George, who "Joyned with" Richard Goodall, William Turner, Robert Lambert, Mary Goodall, and Mary Newell, "Who had walked in that order in old England."

That this church employed an explicit covenant at its formation there can be no doubt from the very wording of the first item in the Church Book, quoted below, though the word "covenant" is not used. It is very simple as compared with that of the Swansea church, and is of the same general type as that of most early Congregational, or rather Independent, covenants.

Covenant of the First Baptist Church, Boston.[2]

The 28 of the 3[d] Mo. 1665 in Charlstowne [Massach]u [setts] The Churche of Christ Commonly (though falsely) C[al]l[e]d Annabaptists were Gathered togather And Entered into [goo]d fellowship & Communion each with other, Ingaigeing to walke together in all the appointments of there Lord & Master the Lord Jesus Christ as farre as hee should bee pleased to make knowne his mind & will vnto them by his word & spirit, and then were Baptised

Thomas Gold
Thomas Osbourne
etc.

[1] See photograph of the first entry in the Record Book of the church, given on pp. 56 plus, of President Nathan E. Wood's "Hist. of the First Baptist Church of Boston." Phila., 1899.

[2] *Ibid.*

This covenant record is valuable as clearly indicating that in this church, at least, the church covenant was employed, and the church so to speak formed, before the administration of the ordinance of baptism.

That this is, indeed, the substance of the original covenant of the First Baptist church, Boston, is indubitably proved by the following quotation from Backus, who himself quotes from "Russell's Narrative."

> A number drew off and met by themselves in Charlestown, till, on May 28th, 1665, Thomas Gould, Thomas Osburne, Edward Drinker, and John George, were baptized,[1] and joined with Richard Goodall, and Mary Newell, "in a solemn covenant, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to walk in fellowship and communion together, in the practise of all the holy appointments of Christ, which he had, or should further make known to them."[2]

It may be of interest to note further, that in the Confession of Faith, exhibited by the church in September, 1665, before the Court of Assistants, articles *l* and *m*, there occurs the following statement: "(*l*) And those that gladly received the word & are baptised are saints by calling & fitt matter for a visible church (*m*) And a competent number of such joyned together in covenant & fellowship of the gosple are a Church of Christ." Certainly no church would have made such a statement in its Confession of Faith unless it employed a covenant, and the citation from the Records, given above, in fact must be the covenant text, for no other of the date 1665 can be found in the early Records.

[1] It will be noticed that Backus, contrary to the account in the Records, places the administration of baptism before the act of covenanting. How he happened to do this does not appear, but it would seem that the old record is our best authority for the order observed in the organization of the church.

[2] Backus' "History," Vol. I., p. 288.

The "Brief Narrative" of John Russell itself, of the date 1680, from which Backus quotes, as reproduced in President Wood's admirable "History of the First Baptist Church of Boston," reads in full on this point:[1]

It pleased God to move the Hearts of some of his dear and precious Servants in this Wilderness, whom he had by his good Word and Spirit taught, and instructed in the Way and Order of the Gospel, to agree together to enter into Fellowship as a particular body, or Church, engaging one to another in a solemn Covenant, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to walk in fellowship and communion together, in the practice of all the Holy Appointments of Christ, which he had, or should further make known unto them. And thus they became a visible Church of Christ, Walking in the Practice, and performance of the holy Ordinances of Christ, according to Divine Institution. The persons who began (this so good a work for God), were, Thomas Gold, Thomas Osburne, Edward Drinker, John George, Richard Goodal, William Turner, Robert Lambert: the three last named, were persons whom God (by his Providence some time before) brought out of Old England, who had walked with the Baptized Churches there; as namely Richard Goodal, was of a church in London, of which Mr. Kiffen is an Officer; and William Turner, and Robert Lambert, were of a church in Dartmouth, of which one Mr. Stead was Officer.

This last quotation makes it absolutely certain that the First Baptist Church, Boston, was formed not only by use of a covenant, but by use of a covenant whose best text is found undoubtedly in the first item in the Records.

Twelve years later than the organization of the First Baptist Church, Boston, the Mayflower Church, Plymouth, renewed its covenant. The account of the renewal of this covenant, as narrated in records of the church,[2] reads:

[1] P. 152.

[2] Copied by Mr. H. N. P. Hubbard, curator and librarian of the Pilgrim Society, Plymouth, Mass.

In 1676 the Lord's supper was six times, five members were admitted, 24 children were baptized. The war continuing and also sickness, the church set apart April 19, for fasting and prayer, and also May 30 ; for the same grounds. The General Court in June being sensible of the heavy hand of God upon the country in the continuance of war with the heathen, appointed a day of Humiliation to be kept, 22 day of it and added thereto a Solemn motion to all our churches to renew a covenant engagement to God for Reformation of all provoking evils. The Church attended that day of prayer and then the Elders appointed a church meeting to be on June 29, The Church then all met ; our church meetings were ever begun and ended with prayer, (the Pastor ordinarily beginning and the Elder concluding therewith) After Prayer for Gods direction and blessing in so solemn a matter, A Church Covenant was read, and the church voted that it should be left upon record as that which they did own to be the substance of that Covenant which their Fathers enterred into at the first gathering of the church,
which was in these words following,

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in
Obedience to his holy will and divine ordinances.

Wee being by the most wise & good providence of God brought together in this place & desirous to unite ourselves into one congregation or church under the Lord Jesus Christ our Head, that it may be in such sort as becometh all those whom He hath redeemed & sanctifyed to himselfe wee doe hereby solemnly and religiously & as in his most holy prescence avouch the Lord Jehovah the only true God to be our God & the God of ours & doe promise & binde ourselves to walke in all our wayes according to the Rule of the Gospel & in all sincere conformity to His hold ordinances & in mutuall love to & watchfullnesse over one another, depending wholy & only upon the Lord our God to enable us by his grace hereunto.

The serious enquiry was made, in what particulars there might be found amongst us a violation of the holy covenant and any unanswerable walking thereunto. Then followed a Proposal, whether we were all willing to renew our covenant for Reformation. The Aged, godly Elder spake his mind particularly to these things, & then the Pastor (whom the Elder had before desired to draw up

an Instrument suitable to the purpose) read a paper in which were mentioned wherin our violations of covenant had bin, etc.

A Baptist church was organized in Kittery, in the "Province of Maine," September 25, 1682. The following is the Kittery covenant as given in the records of the First Baptist Church, Boston.

A Coppy of there said Covenant.

Wee whose names are here und^e^ written doe solemnly & on good Consideration, god Assisting us by his grace give up our selves to ye lord & to one another in Solemn Covenant, wherein wee doe Covenant & promise to walk with god & one with another In A dew and faithfull observance of all his most holy and blessed Command-m.^tts^, Ordinances, Institutions or Appointments, Revealed to us in his sacred word of ye ould & new Testament and according to ye grace of god & light att present through his grace given us, or here after he shall please to discover & make knowne to us thro his holy Spiritt according to ye same blessed word all ye Dayes of our lives and this will wee doe, If ye lord graciously please to Assist us by his grace & Spiritt & to give us Divine wisdome, strength, knowledg, & understanding from Above to p-forme ye same without which we cann doe nothing John 15 : 4 2 Corinthians 3 : 5.

Signed by

W^m^ Screeven, Elder
Humphry Churchwood, Deacon:
Robert Williams
John Morgradye [Morgradge]
Richard Cutt
Timothy Davis
Leonard Drown
W^m^ Addams
Humphry Axill
George Litten

This is A true Coppy compared with ye origenall & owned by all our Brethren and seven sisters as Attest

W^m^ Screeven in behalf of ye rest.[1]

In this connection it may be of value to compare with the Kittery covenant, which is doubtless a fair representative of Baptist covenants of this period, the early covenant of the Congregational church in Woburn, Mass., of the date 1642. This will bring to our attention the fact that the American Baptists apparently were dependent on the Congregationalists not only for the idea, but also in some measure for the general expression of their church covenants.

"The Church-Covenant" of the "Church of Christ" in Woburn, "being the three and twentieth Church" "in the Mattachusetts Government." Declared, June 24, 1642:

We that do assemble our selves this day before God and his people, in an unfeigned desire, to be accepted of him as a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the Rule of the New-Testament, do acknowledg our selves to be the most unworthy of all others, that we should attain such a high grace, and the most unable of our selves to the performance of any thing that is good, abhorring our selves for all our former defilements in the worship of God, and other wayes, and resting only upon the Lord Jesus Christ for atonement, and upon the power of his grace for the guidance of our whole after course, do here in the name of Christ Jesus, as in the presence of the Lord, from the bottom of our hearts agree together through his grace to give up our selves, first unto the Lord Jesus as our only King, Priest and Prophet, wholly

[1] Text from the church record of the First Baptist Church, Boston. Cited in President Nathan E. Wood's "History," pp. 181, 182.

to be subject unto him in all thing, and therewith one unto another, as in a Church-Body to walk together in all the Ordinances of the Gospel, and in all such mutual love and offices thereof, as toward one another in the Lord ; and all this, both according to the present light that the Lord hath given us, as also according to all further light, which he shall be pleased at any time to reach out unto us out of the Word by the goodness of his grace, renouncing also in the same Covenant all errors and Schismes, and whatsoever by-wayes that are contrary to the blessed rules revealed in the Gospel, and in particular the inordinate love and seeking after the things of the world ; every Church hath not the same for words, for they are not for a form of words.[1]

In these two covenants, notwithstanding differences of expression, there are certain striking resemblances. They are both exceedingly simple in form and in substance, are not extended documents, their thought is in the main the same, and in places their language even is much alike. They both state the desire to form a church on principles derived from the Bible ; in the first case, "Revealed to us in his sacred word of ye ould & new Testament," in the second, "according to the Rule of the New-Testament." Both covenants are made first to the Lord and then to one another. Both rely on the assistance of the Lord or Christ for power to fulfill the covenant. As to similarity of phraseology notice that, in the first case, there is a "promise *to walk* with god & one with another In A dew and faithfull observance of *all* his most holy and blessed Commandm.^tts^, *Ordinances*, Institutions or Appointments." In the second, there is a giving up of self "*to walk together* in *all* the *Ordi-*

[1] Text from Captain Edward Johnson's "Wonder Working Providence" (Prince Society), p. 179.

nances of the Gospel." Again, observe that in the Kittery covenant the promise is made to walk "*according* to ye grace of god & *light att present* through his grace *given us,* or *here after he shall please* to discover & make known to us thro his holy Spiritt according to ye same blessed *word;*" while in the Woburn covenant the expression is very similar, namely, a giving up of self on the part of those covenanting to walk "both *according* to the *present light* that the Lord hath *given us,* as also according to all *further light,* which *he shall be pleased* at any time to reach out unto us out of the *Word* by the goodness of his grace." Such similarity in the phraseology employed seems to indicate a familiarity on the part of the Baptists with the contemporary Congregationalist covenants. Indeed, certain expressions had by this time come to be employed in practically all church covenants.

The rapidity with which the church covenant idea was developed among the Congregationalists, even during the seventeenth century, may be seen from the following copy of the original covenant of the Congregational church at Plympton, Mass., of the date October 27, 1698. It was drawn up, therefore, but sixteen years later than the covenant of the Baptist church in Kittery, but it is a very much more extended document, though the thought is simple. It reads as follows :[1]

Forasmuch as it hath pleased God who hath commanded us to pray dayly that his Kingdom may come & be advanced & hath given directions in his holy word And manifold incouragements to his poore servants to seek & sett forward his worship and the Consummation[2]

[1] Text secured through the kindness of Rev. E. C. Davis, pastor of the Congregational Church at Plympton, Mass.

[2] Almost illegible, but probably the word intended.

of his glory—Wee Do therefore personally present ourselves this daye in the holy presents of God to transact with him in this great affair of his Kingdom and glory and our own salvation And Humbling ourselves before the Lord for all our Sinns & the sinns of ours earnestly praying for pardoning mercy and reconciliation with God through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and for his Glorious presents & assistance of his holy spirit under a deep sense of our own weakness & unworthyness & with a humble confidence of his favorable atestation each one for our selves & all of us jointly together enter into a holy covenant with God & one with another That is to saye we doe according to these terms & honor of ye Everlasting Covenant first give up our selves & our offspring to the Lord God Father Sone & Holy Ghost As the onely True & living God all sufficient and our God in covenant and to our Lord Jesus Christ our only Savior & prophet priest & King & the onely Mediator of the Covenant of Grace promissing And Covenanting through the help of his grace To cleave to God & our Lord Jesus Christ by faith in a waye of Gospell obedience with full purpose of heart as his Covenant people. And doe allso By this Act of Confederation Give up ourselves one unto another in y^e^ Lord According to the will of God promising & engaging to cleave & walk together in a holly union & communion as members of the Misticall Body and instituted Church of Christ. Rightly instituted & established in ye true faith & order of the Gospell further obliging our selves by this our holy Covenant to Keep and maintain the holy word and worship of God committed unto us And to endeavor faithfully to transmit it to our posterity to cleave unto & uphold the true gospell ministry established by Jesus Christ in his church to have it in our Honour & esteem for ye works sake & to submit our selves fully & sincerely to the ministeriall Exercise of y^e^ power of Christ in y^e^ dispensation of the word & administration of the sacraments the Lords Supper to those in full communion & without offence Bap-

tized to vissible church members & their infant seed as allso for the due application of disipline with Love care and faithfulness watching one over another and over all the Children of the Covenant growing up with us and all in obedience to the Blessed rule and Government of our Lord Jesus Christ the alone head of the Church And withal wee further Ingage our selves to walk orderly in a waye of fellowship and Communion with all neighboring Churches according to ye Rule of the Gospell that the name of ye Lord Jesus Christ Maye be one throughout all the Churches to the Glory of God the Father Our Holy Covenant wee doe in Most Sollemn Maner take upon our selves in all the parts of it with full purpose of heart as the Lord shall help us and according to the Measure of Grace receved wee will walk before God fully and steadfastly and Constantly in the discharg of all Covenant Duties & the Lord keep this forever in the thoughts and emaginations of the hearts of us his poore servants to establish our hearts unto him and the good Lord pardon every one of us that prepareth his heart to seek the Lord God of his ffathers

Amen &c

About the beginning of the eighteenth century it seems there was some uniformity manifest in the expression of Congregational church covenants. Concerning the covenant documents of this period, Cotton Mather says :[1]

"The forms used by the several churches in the *renewal of covenant*, were not in all points the same, nor did our churches at all find that this *variformity* was an inconvenience ; but that it gave them a *liberty* and *advantage* to consult their own edification, by adapting their *forms* unto their own special circumstances.

[1] "Magnalia," 1820, Vol. V., pp, 283, 284.

However the *form* which, with little variation, was most used shall be now recited.

"We, who thro' the exceeding riches of the grace and patience of God, do continue to be a church of Christ, being now assembled in the holy presence of God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, after humble confession of our manifold breaches of the covenant, before the Lord our God, and earnest supplication of pardoning mercy thro' the blood of Christ, and deep acknowledgment of our great unworthiness to be own'd to be the Lord's covenant-people; also acknowledging our own inability to keep covenant with God or to perform any spiritual duty unless the Lord Jesus do enable us thereto by his Spirit dwelling in us; and being awfully sensible, that it is a dreadful thing for sinful dust and ashes personally to transact with the infinitely glorious Majesty of Heaven and Earth; we do in humble confidence of his gracious assistance and acceptance thro' Christ, each one of us, for ourselves, and jointly as a church of the living God, and one with another, in manner following, i. e.

"We do give up ourselves to that *God*, whose name alone is *Jehovah*, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the one only true and living God, and to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, as our only blessed Saviour, prophet, priest, and king, over our souls, and only mediator of the covenant of grace, promising (by the help of his spirit and grace) to cleave unto God, as our chief good, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and gospel-obedience, as becometh his covenant-people for ever. We do also give up our *offspring* unto God in Jesus Christ, avouching the Lord to be *our God*, and the *God of our children*, and ourselves with our children to be *his people;* humbly adoring the grace of God, that we and our offspring with us may be looked upon to be *the Lord's*.

"We do, also, give up ourselves *one to another* in the Lord, and according to the will of God; freely cove-

nanting and binding ourselves to walk together as a right ordered *congregation* and *church* of Christ, in all the ways of his worship, according to the holy rules of the word of God; promising in *brotherly love* to watch over one another's souls faithfully, and to submit ourselves unto the *discipline* and *government* of Christ in his church, and duly to attend all those ordinances, which Christ hath instituted in his church, and commanded to be attended by his people, according to the order of the gospel, and degrees of communion, unto which we have attained; not resting in measures attained, but pressing after all. And whereas the *messengers* of these churches, who have met together in the name of Christ, to enquire into the reason of God's *controversie* with his people, have taken notice of many *provoking evils*, as the procuring causes of the judgments of God upon *New-England;* so far as we or any of us have been guilty of *provoking* God by any sin therein discovered to us, we desire from our hearts to bewail it before the Lord, and humbly to entreat for pardoning mercy, for the sake of the *blood of the everlasting covenant.* And as an *expedient* to the *reformation* of those evils, or whatsoever else, have provoked the eyes of God's glory amongst us, we do freely engage and promise, as in the presence of God;

"First, That we will (Christ's helping) endeavour every one of us to *reform* our heart and life, by seeking to mortifie all our sins, and labouring to walk more closely with God, than ever yet we have done; and will continue to worship God in publick, private, secret; and this without formality or hypocrisie: and more fully and faithfully than heretofore, to discharge all covenant duties, one to another in *church communion.*

"Secondly, To walk before God *in our houses, with a perfect heart,* and that we will uphold the worship of God therein continually, according as he in his word doth require; both in respect of *prayer* and *reading* the scriptures, that so the word of God may dwell richly in

us: and we will do what in us lies to bring up our *children* for Christ, that they may be such as have the Lord's name put upon them by a solemn dedication to God in Christ, ought to be. And will therefore (as need shall be) *catechise*, exhort, and charge them to the fear of the Lord; and endeavour to set an holy *example* before them, and be much in prayer for their conversion and salvation.

"Thirdly, To endeavour to be pure from the *sins of the times*, especially those sins, which have been by the late *synod* solemnly declared and evidenced to be the evils that have brought the judgments of God upon *New-England;* and in our places to endeavour the suppression thereof, and be careful so to walk, as that we may not give occasion to others to sin, or speak evil of our holy profession.

"Now that we may observe and keep this sacred covenant and all the branches of it inviolable for ever, we desire to deny ourselves and to depend wholly upon the *power* of the eternal *Spirit of Grace*, and on the free mercy of God, and merit of Christ Jesus: and where we shall fail, there to wait upon the Lord Jesus for pardon, acceptance, and healing for his name's sake."

It will readily be seen that this covenant is longer and much more elaborate than that of the Plympton church, previously quoted, and therefore affords an even more excellent illustration of how very rapidly the church covenant was developed among Congregationalists, even during the seventeenth century.

Baptist churches were not numerous in New England during the seventeenth century. A few others than those already mentioned, however, were formed, among them those of Gloster (1649), of Tiverton, Rhode Island (1685), and of Chilmark, Martha's Vineyard (1693).

Even from 1700 to 1740, in which year began the so-

called "Great Awakening" or "Great Revival" in New England in connection with the labors of Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, and others, the number of Baptist churches formed in New England was still comparatively small, comprising those of Smithfield (1706), Hopkinton (1708), North Kingston (1710), Warwick and Scituate (1725), Cumberland (1732), and East Greenwich (1743), in Rhode Island; and those of Rehoboth (1732), Sutton (1735), Brimfield, now Wales (1736), Bellingham (1737), and Leicester (1738), in Massachusetts. During this period the first extant covenant of the First Baptist Church in Newport, R. I., also was adopted, being of the date May 4, 1727.

THE COVENANT OF THE NEWPORT CHURCH.[1]

We who desire to walk together in y^e^ fear of y^e^ lord do by the help and assistance of the holy ghost profess our deep Sense of Sin & humiliation therefor & do now Sollomly in the presence of the great god y^e^ Elect angels & one another having a Sense of our unworthyness Considered of our Selves & looking wholly and alone to y^e^ lord Jesus Christ for worthyness & Exceptance give up our Selves to the lord in a Church state y^t^ he may be our god and we his people through the Everlasting Covenant of his free grace desiring to Submitt to Jesus Christ as y^e^ King & head of his Church Imbracing him as y^e^ prophet priest & King of our Salvation & to conform to all his holy laws and ordinances for our groath Establishment & Consolation y^t^ we may be a holy Spouse unto him; being fully Satisfied in y^e^ way of Church Communion & of y^e^ truth of grace on Each others Soul in Some good measure we do now Sollomly In y^e^ Name and fear of god Joyn our Selves together in a holy union & fellowship humbly Submitting to y^e^ discipline

[1] Original text obtained through the kindness of Rev. Brewer G. Boardman, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Newport, R. I.

of the gospel and all holy Duties which our Spiritual relation Enjoyns & requires we promise by y^e^ help of Divine grace without which we can do nothing to walk in all godlyness humility & brotherly love so that our Communion may be delightfull to god and Comfortable to our Selves & y^e^ rest of y^e^ lords people to watch over Each others Conversation & not Suffer Sin upon one another as god Shall discover it to us or any of us & to stir up Each other to love & good works & if any fall into Sin to warn and admonish them according to y^e^ Nature of y^e^ offence with a Spirit of Meekness as y^e^ gospel requires we promise & Engage to pray with and for one another as god Shall Enable us from time to time for y^e^ glory of this Church y^t^ y^e^ presence of god may be in it & his spirit rest upon it & his protection over it y^t^ it may be Increased with the Increase of god we do promise to bear one anothers burthens weeknesses Short Comings and Infirmities & not to acquaint any without y^e^ garden of Christ of them but to observe y^e^ Rule of Christ in Such Cases we do promise to strive togather for y^e^ truth of y^e^ gospel & purity of gods ordinances and Endevour to pass a Christian construction upon these y^t^ in Sone lesser & Extra fundimental points difer from us Endevouring to keep the unity of y^e^ Spirit in y^e^ bond of peace with all y^t^ hold y^e^ Head Jesus Christ both their lord and ours and y^t^ we will not retain a pharisaical Spirit to withdraw in y^e^ time of Prayer, but will Joyne with all Such as in y^e^ ground of Charity are true beleivers & Churches of Jesus Christ we promise to observe y^e^ publick worship of god on lords days & at other times, as god may afford oppertunity & strive what in us lies for Each others Edification Each and Every of these things, we humbly Submitt to in the Name & fear of god promising and Purposing to perform not in our own strength being conscious of our own Weekness ; but in y^e^ power & strength of y^e^ blessed god whose redeemed ones we trust we are and whome we Sincearly

desir to Serve To whome be glory in all the Churches now & Evermore Amen——

Signed by us In y^e^ Name and behalfe of the whole Church at a church meeting this 4^th^ day of May In y^e^ Year 1727.——	William Packcom Eldor John Comer Pastor Samuel Maxwell Deacon Philip Weeden Samuel Packcom Philip Weeden James Peckham George Hall Edward Smith Jun. William Packcom.

The covenant of the Baptist church in Sutton, given below, is a somewhat shorter and perhaps more characteristic example of the covenants of this period than that last quoted. This church was constituted September 16, 1735, and two years later Benjamin Marsh and Thomas Green (the latter an early planter of Leicester, Mass.,) were ordained its joint pastors. The church was small and was not long after dissolved, but a copy of its original covenant on a loose piece of paper has been preserved, and as late as 1888 was in possession of the Leicester Church.

Covenant of the Baptist Church in Sutton, Mass.[1]

(A chh. covenant, &c.) (A. D. 1735.)

Wee the Subscribers holding only to Believers Baptism : and having been so far agreed in the first Principles of the Doctrines of Christ, that we have submitted our Selves unto Christian Baptism ; and do now Consider that we have, by our baptismal Vows, laid our

1 "The Greenville Baptist Church in Leicester, Mass. Exercises on the 150th Anniversary of its Formation. September 28, 1888." Worcester, 1889. Pp. 18, 19.

Selves under strong Obligations to Serve God, and one another. And that we might be under better capacity to Serve God, and to be helps one to another, we now Imbody our Selves into a Particular Church: that we may have the Power of Church Government: That we may by a major vote in the Church, Chuse Church Officers, and take in Members; and by the same Power, upon sufficient Reason, may Put them out of Office in the Church again: and lay Members under Suspension, or Cast them out of the Church. And for these reasons, We now make a Solemn Covenant one with another, in the Presents of the Everlasting God, First) to take the one, true, and living God, Father, Son, and Spirit, to be our God, and to look unto him at all times, for help and assistance, that we may perform all those Duties that he has enjoined upon us: and that we may be kept from all Sin and Error. (2ly.) We take the Scriptures of the holy Prophets, and Apostles, to be our Rule of Faith and Obedience. (3ly.) We Promise, one to another, to Worship God, according to the Rules of the Gospel. (4ly.) We Promise, that in the Church whereunto we do belong, we will endeavor to keep the Worship of God pure from human inventions. (5ly.) We Promise, to take the watch care, and Over-sight one of another: That if a brother or sister should be overtaken in a Fault, to Restore Such an one in the Spirit of meekness. (6ly.) We Promise, that as much as in us lays, we will indeavor to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace. And that, we will indeavor to live together in Love, Peace, and Charity, So long as God in his Good Providence shall keep us together. These, and all other Christian duties, we Promise, by Divine assistance to perform; Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our Faith.

Dated September 16th, 1735.

Thomas Green, &c.

This document manifests a great advance in the form and substance of the covenant as compared with that of

the church in Kittery. Notice the long introduction and the increased number of divisions or sections, as well as their orderly presentation; also the considerably increased length of the whole.

After the "Great Awakening" Baptist churches rapidly became more numerous, so that even before the Revolution as many as twenty-five or six new Baptist churches had been formed in Massachusetts alone. Each of these churches, in all probability, had its covenant, varying in expression, but retaining what had come to be considered the essential features of covenant documents.

The Baptist church covenants of this period may be represented by that employed at the organization in 1768 of the church in North Berwick, Maine. The word "covenant" is not employed in the records of this church, but that a covenant was used at its formation is certain. The substance, and even what is probably the original text, appears in the church book in the form of a record, as given below.

"The first entry in the records of this church is under the date of June 28, 1768, when the church was organized."[1] First come the usual Articles of Faith, to which are appended the names of the original members of the church. Then we have the following, which is undoubtedly the church covenant:

Being incorporated into a Baptist church of Christ; by considering and approving the Baptist Confession of Faith, through examining the Scriptures, we find them pointing out that way of worship prescribed by Christ

[1] "Centennial Discourse delivered on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Organization of the Baptist Church in North Berwick, Maine, Sept. 10, 1868," by Edmund Worth, pastor of the Baptist church, Kennebunk Village. Biddeford, 1868.

and his apostles: we do heartily comply with them desiring these truths may spread far and wide. And as we profess this, we promise to walk according thereto as God shall enable us, and that we will help to support and assist in everything conducive to the spread of the gospel in this place as God shall help us, bearing our part of all necessary charges that may arise in this church of Christ hereafter. [1]

This document shows that individual Baptist churches still used considerable freedom in the expression and substance of the covenant.

From the time of the Revolution until 1832, when the New Hampshire Baptist State Convention made the first largely successful movement toward uniformity in Articles of Faith and Covenant among Baptist churches in America, the number of Baptist churches in New England had increased to seven hundred and sixteen, though, doubtless, there was by no means a corresponding variety of covenant formulas.

A good example of the church covenants of this period may be found in that published in the minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Maine, in 1795, but of an earlier date, and another in the minutes of the same association for 1817.

The first of these covenants reads as follows:

We do now, in the presence of all seeing and most gracious God, and before Angels and men, give up ourselves to the Lord Jehovah, Father Son and Holy Spirit, and avouch him this day to be our Father, Saviour, Leader, and Teacher, and receive him as our only por-

[1] "Centennial Discourse delivered on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Organization of the Baptist Church in North Berwick, Maine, Sept. 10, 1868," by Edmund Worth, pastor of the Baptist church, Kennebunk Village. Biddeford, 1868.

tion for ever. Also we receive Jesus Christ as the Supreme head of the Church: and mediator of the new covenant: and our Prophet, Priest and King to govern and teach us in the way to, and appear as our advocate with the Father for our admittance. We acknowledge it is our indispensible duty to glorify our covenant God, by living holy lives in this present world, in all our several places and relations. And we engage by divine assistance to improve our time, strength, talents, and advantages for the glory of God, and the good of our fellow men. Promising that by divine help we will walk in our houses in the fear of God: training up those committed to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We also give up ourselves to one another, covenanting and promissing to act towards each other as brethren in Christ: Watching not only against those that are called more gross evils, but also against all foolish talking and jesting, which is not convenient; also disputing about words and things that lead to strife, or disregarding promisses, and not fulfilling engagements, tatling and backbiting, spending time idly at taverns or elsewhere, and all vain and unnecessary conversation on the Lord's day; or whatsoever is contrary to God's word. Promissing to hold communion together, in the worship of God, ordinances of Christ and discipline of his church, according as we are or shall be guided thereto by the word and spirit of God: Believing that he will further and more gloriously open his word and the mysteries of his kingdom. Mean while flying to the blood of the everlasting covenant for the pardon of our many errors, and praying that the Almighty would prepare and strengthen us for every good work: working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.

With the above it will be interesting to compare a representative Congregational covenant of a somewhat

earlier date, viz, a later covenant of the Woburn Church, Mass., adopted in 1756.

The Woburn Covenant of 1756.[1]

We whose names are hereunto subscribed, apprehending ourselves called of God into a Church State of the Gospel, do first of all confess ourselves unworthy to be so highly favored of the Lord, and admire that rich & free grace of his that triumphs over so great unworthiness, and with an humble reliance upon the aids of grace therein promised to those who, through a sense of their own inability to do any good thing, do humbly wait on him for all, we do thankfully lay hold on his Covenant, and chuse the things that please him.

1. We avouch the Lord to be our God, and give up ourselves and our Seed after us in their generations to be his people, in the truth and sincerity of our hearts.

2ly. We give up ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be ruled and guided by him in the matters of his worship, and in our whole conversation; acknowledging him not only our alone Saviour, but our King to reign and rule over us, and our Prophet and teacher by his word and Spirit; forsaking all other teachers and doctrines which he has not commanded; and we do wholly disclaim our own righteousness in point of Justification, and depend alone upon him for righteousness and Life, Grace and Glory.

3ly. We do profess ourselves to be Congregational in our Judgment, and do purpose to practise upon Congregational principles, as far as they are agreeable to the doctrines of God's word, looking upon the Platform of Discipline in general, as gathered out of the word of God, and agreeing therewith.

4ly. We do further promise, by the help of Christ, to walk with our brethren and sisters of this Congregation

[1] Samuel Sewall's "History of Woburn, Mass." Boston, 1868. P. 534. Appendix No. 4.

in the spirit of brotherly love, watching over them, and caring for them ; avoiding all jealousies, suspicions, backbitings, censurings, quarrelings and secret risings of heart against them ; forgiving and forbearing, and yet seasonably admonishing and restoring them by a spirit of meekness, and settling them in joynt again that have been overtaken in any fault amongst us.

5ly. We further promise and bind ourselves in the strength of Christ to labour how we may advance the Gospel and Kingdom of Christ ; how we may win and gain them that are without, how we may settle grace and peace amongst ourselves ; and seek as much as we can the peace of all the Churches ; seeking the help, counsel and direction of other churches, if need be ; not putting a stumbling block before any, but will labour to abstain from all appearance [of evil].

6ly. We do hereby promise to behave and demean ourselves obediently in all lawfull things to those that God hath or shall place over us in the Church or Commonwealth ; knowing that it is our duty not to grieve them, but to encourage them in their places, and in the administration of the charge which God hath committed unto them.

7ly. We Resolve, by the help and strength of God, to approve ourselves in our particular callings as becometh saints : shunning idleness, not sloathfull in business, knowing that idleness is the bane of any Society : Neither will we deal h[ardly] or oppressingly with any wherein we are the Lord's stewards. And further ? [finally] we promise to dedicate our Children to God, and to teach them the good knowledge of God the Lord, according to the best of our abilities, and to fear and serve him with us, that it may be well with them and us forever.

These things we solemnly promise, as in the presence of the omniscient Jehovah.

It will be observed in these longer church covenants that there are considerable portions which are not dupli-

cated, and yet it must be admitted that certain sections are strikingly similar in substance and often in expression. For instance, sections 1, 2, 4, and 7 of the Woburn Covenant are all largely reproduced in the Bowdoinham Covenant. Indeed, these two documents certainly resemble each other very much more than they resemble either of the first two covenants we have compared. Evidently, as the church covenant idea developed in Baptist churches, those who drew up the covenants still continued to consult earlier documents, and possibly even those of a different denomination.

The covenant contained in the Bowdoinham Association Minutes of 1817 is as follows:

We, having been enabled as we hope, by divine grace to give up ourselves first to the Lord, then to each other in the relation of christian union and fellowship, do, in the presence of the all-seeing God, and of angels, and men, (so far as God may enable us by his grace) solemnly covenant to renounce the corrupt sentiments, vain amusements, and practices of the world, and to devote ourselves to the fear and service of God: taking the Holy Scriptures for our guide, and the example of Christ and his apostles for our pattern. We also agree to watch over ourselves, and strive so to order our conversation and conduct in life as to give no just occasion of grief to any of the children of God, or any other of our fellow men. To watch over each other for good; to reprove, rebuke, and admonish one another in love, as occasion may require; and if we at any time may know that any member of the Church is guilty of immoral conduct, that we will not expose them by tattling it to others, but will faithfully labor with them, according to the direction of our Lord: Mat. 18 : 15, 16, 17, that sin may be put away from among us, and that iniquity may not be harbored in the Church. That we will not for-

sake the assembling of ourselves together, for the public worship of God, and at other meetings which the Church may appoint to transact the important concerns of Zion.

We also covenant to regard the first day of the week as the Lord's day, to be more immediately devoted to the worship and service of God. That we will endeavor to restrain our families, from those things which are not consistent with the solemnities of that day. That we will endeavor to worship God in our houses, and strive to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That we will demean ourselves as good citizens, having all due respect to the constituted authorities of our country. That we will not neglect to pray for our fellow-creatures, for all that are in authority, for the peace and prosperity of Zion, and for each other in particular; that we will participate of each others joys, and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each others burdens and sorrows; that we will cheerfully bear our equal portion of those expenses which the Church may judge needful for the relief of the poor, the support of the ministry, and other necessary charges of the Church. That we will seek divine aid to enable us to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, that we may give practical testimony to the world, that the grace of God teacheth us to deny ungodliness and every worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world; that God would enable us to fill up our lives with usefulness, and at last receive us to join the Church triumphant, to celebrate the praises of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. AMEN.

In 1832 the New Hampshire Convention prepared and approved, for the use of Baptist churches in that State, a "Declaration of Faith and Practise together with a Covenant." Both came to be very generally used in New England and even beyond, especially as

the American Baptist Publication Society began to publish them in 1853 for the churches in general in "The Baptist Church Manual," prepared by J. Newton Brown, D. D., author of the original New Hampshire "Declaration of Faith and Covenant." Furthermore, the Publication Society printed no other form of covenant for the general use of Baptist churches until 1895, when there appeared "A New Baptist Church Manual," containing a slightly modified covenant of the New Hampshire type. Thus the New Hampshire covenant probably has been more widely accepted in Baptist churches in the Northern States at least than any other form. Indeed, it is doubtless true that the majority of Baptist church covenants in use in America to-day are based more or less on that connected with the New Hampshire Declaration of Faith of 1832.

The following is the New Hampshire Covenant:[1]

Church Covenant.

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour; and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

[1] Dr. J. Newton Brown's "Baptist Church Manual." Philadelphia, 1853. Pp. 23, 24.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion ; to religiously educate our children ; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances ; to walk circumspectly in the world ; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment ; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger ; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love ; to remember each other in prayer ; to aid each other in sickness and distress ; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech ; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage, that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant, and the principles of God's word.

PRAYER.

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will ; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

With the New Hampshire Covenant we may here profitably compare one used by a modern Congregational church, in order to see whether the American Congregational and Baptist church covenants still continue to have that close relationship to one another that has been observed at earlier periods. A very close likeness, except in length and in the general expression cannot, of course, be expected, for though regular or

stereotyped forms are liable to appear with the lapse of time, it is probable that modern Congregational church covenants vary far more than those used to-day among the Baptists. Yet that of the First Congregational Church in Chelsea, Mass., possibly may be called a fair example of the best modern Congregational church covenants. It reads as follows :[1]

In the presence of God and this assembly, you do now freely and cordially enter into the everlasting

COVENANT OF GRACE.

Humbly confessing and forsaking your sins, and believing on the Lord Jesus with all your heart, you do avouch the Father Almighty, your Maker and Preserver, the Lord Jesus Christ, His equal and eternal Son, your Saviour and Master, and the Holy Spirit, your Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide, to be your God.

You do trust only in His sovereign grace and almighty power.

You humbly and cheerfully consecrate your whole self, body, soul, and spirit, to be His, and at His entire disposal forever.

You promise that you will, henceforth, faithfully endeavor to keep His commandments and follow Him in all things ; whatever you do, to do all for His glory ; to give diligent heed to His word and ordinances ; to do all that in you lies to convert the sinner from the error of his ways ; and, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

This you truly confess and heartily engage ?

[Candidates assent.]

[1] From the Manual of the First Congregational Church, Chelsea, Mass. Boston, 1875.

[In case none join on profession of faith, the form of admission shall commence here. In case none join by letter, the following sentence shall be omitted :]

Those who are to join this church by letter from other churches, having elsewhere made a satisfactory confession of their faith, and covenanted publicly with God, will now present themselves to enter with those already before us into

COVENANT WITH THIS CHURCH.

[After all have taken their places, the minister shall say :]

You do now cordially join yourself to this church, and you solemnly covenant to attend faithfully upon its services, to support its public worship and ordinances, to uphold its faith, to sustain and obey its rules and discipline, to honor it as you may be able by an upright life, to labor and pray for its peace and purity, its edification, usefulness, and prosperity, and to walk with its members in love and faithfulness.

This with the Divine help you pledge yourself to do ?

[The candidates shall assent as before.]

Then follow the welcome to the covenant by the church, the giving of the hand of fellowship, etc.

If this may be regarded as an average example of the best covenants of the American Congregational churches of the present time, it may reasonably be concluded that the American Baptists of to-day are holding much more closely to the historical form of the church covenant than are the Congregationalists. This Congregational covenant is in reality a "Form of Admission," such as we have already noticed in two or three churches in England, and not a church covenant in the strictest sense of the word.

But, though the Baptists may follow more closely the

earlier form of the covenant, yet the covenant naturally does not occupy so prominent a position in Baptist, as in Congregational, church polity to-day, any more than it has occupied in the past. The Congregationalists, to be sure, in the case of altering a covenant of the old type into a "Form of Admission," have made a slight departure from the general view of the early churches of that denomination, but they have thereby, no doubt, added to its practical adaptability to modern church life.

As has been said, the New Hampshire covenant is probably that most commonly used in American Baptist churches to-day. However, there are other forms employed in some churches, which differ more or less from it, and of which therefore some examples may here be given.

The following is the covenant of the Dudley Street Baptist Church, Boston, Mass., as given in the manual of that church.

As we trust we have been brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the influence of his Spirit to give ourselves up to him, so we do now solemnly covenant with each other, that, God, enabling us, we will walk together in brotherly love; that we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, rebuke, and admonish one another, as the case shall require; that we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor omit the great duty of prayer, both for ourselves and for others; that we will participate in each other's joys, and endeavor, with tenderness and sympathy, to bear each other's burdens and sorrows; that we will earnestly endeavor to bring up such as may be under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that we will seek divine aid to enable us to walk circumspectly and

watchfully in the world; denying ungodliness and every worldly lust; that we will strive together for the support of a faithful evangelical ministry among us; that we will endeavor, by example and effort, to win souls to Christ, and through life, amidst evil report and good report, seek to live to the glory of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

It may be remarked here, that the above covenant seems to be based on, and closely follows, the text of the church covenant[1] recommended to the Baptist churches in Maine in 1846 by the Maine Baptist Convention. It would be interesting to know whether this general form of church covenant is of an earlier date than 1846, and what was its origin.

The following is the covenant given in the Church Manual of the First Baptist Church, Philadelphia, printed in 1896.

Believing that we have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit have accepted Him as our Saviour, we do now solemnly covenant with each other, that God enabling us, we will strive together in brotherly love for the promotion of His Cause, and the development of our Christian character, exhorting and admonishing one another as occasion may require, participating in each other's joys and endeavoring with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows; That we will, by attendance at the regular meetings of the Church, sustain the public worship of Almighty God, and will cheerfully contribute of our means, for the maintenance of a faithful Gospel ministry among us, for the relief of the poor and for the various objects of Christian benevolence; That we will regularly observe private and family devo-

[1] Contained in the Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association for 1848.

tion and endeavor to bring up those who may be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; That we will, in our business and social relations, seek to maintain an upright and Godly life, and by example and effort, to win souls to Christ, striving at all times to live to the glory of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

In the Manual of the Free Street Baptist Church, Portland, Maine, the following covenant is given:

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on profession of our faith having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our de-

portment; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour, and to strive amidst evil report and good report to live to the glory of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay, thus endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do His will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The covenant published in "A New Baptist Church Manual" of 1895, of which mention has already been made in connection with the New Hampshire covenant, resembles the latter so closely that it will not be necessary to give the text here. The covenant of the Dudley Street Church and that of the First Church, Philadelphia, are very much alike and of a different type from that used at the Free Street Church, which is an improved New Hampshire covenant.

We have now seen that, in contrast with the development in England, a considerable degree of uniformity in the scope and language of the church covenant has been secured in American Baptist churches. This has been brought about gradually during the latter half of the past century, till now the use of a covenant of a highly

developed type has become general, at least in the Northern States of this country. With the American Congregationalists, also, covenant documents have come to be more and more carefully expressed, doubtless with a somewhat correspondingly increased similarity of thought and text.

CHAPTER XII

THE MANNER OF USING THE CHURCH COVENANT THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY TO THE PRESENT TIME

WE have thus far traced the development of the church covenant idea from its informal beginning among the German Anabaptists. We may now properly inquire concerning the manner in which the church covenant has been used. On this point information in regard to the practice of the Anabaptists is meagre, but it seems that they seldom used written covenants, though reference has been made to one written document of articles of faith and covenant combined. In general, however, those seeking admission into Anabaptist churches, having manifested their faith in Christ and been baptized, probably made an informal covenant union with God orally and promised to be faithful to one another as members of the church.

The Scotch covenants generally were either written on rolls of parchment, or written or printed in books containing many pages for signatures. The covenant was usually first read to an audience by an appointed speaker and then signed by those present.

The manner in which independent covenants were used before 1640 varied. For instance, Robert Browne's Church in Norwich seems to have covenanted in the

following manner, as nearly as can be determined from the data contained in a "Trve and Short Declaration." First, those desiring to become members covenanted "to hold together." It would seem that a written covenant document may have been prepared beforehand, in which evidently were several sections. Each of these various divisions was read aloud, probably by the pastor, who proved from the Scriptures the content of each section, and exhorted its acceptance. To each point the members then expressed assent orally by the words, "To this we give our consent." Samuel Wilton Rix, in his "Brief Records of the Independent Church at Beccles, Suffolk," however, says:[1] "On the formation of their [the Brownists'] first church at Norwich, their *covenant* was read aloud by one, and then subscribed by all the brethren." Where Mr. Rix obtained his information concerning the use of this covenant does not appear. What he says, however, may not be contradictory to the description given above, but evidently it was not taken from Browne's own account. It is certainly quite possible that after verbally assenting to the various divisions of the covenant, the members may have signed their names also, as a final endorsement of the whole. But the document, if fully written out, must have been exceedingly informal in expression. Francis Johnson's covenant, or articles, of 1591, it will be remembered, was a comparatively explicit written document to be signed.

John Murton, in his "A Description," etc., has preserved for us an account of the manner in which John Robinson's Church, probably at Scrooby in 1606, was formed. He says:[2] "Is this so strange to *John Robinson?*

[1] P. 114. [2] P. 170.

do we not know the beginnings of his Church? that there was first one stood vp and made a couenant, and then another, and these two ioyned together, and so a third, and these became a Church, say they." This method of covenanting was, then, different from that of earlier Brownist churches, excepting possibly Smyth's original Gainsborough Church, from which Robinson is said to have come. In fact, this quotation may indicate the way in which the so-called Mayflower covenant was first used.

The manner in which Henry Jacob's Church was formed in 1616, has been recorded most fully in the W. A. Jessey Records, found in the Gould Manuscript. The following is the account:

> The Church Anno 1616 was gathered
>
> Hereupon y^e^ said Henry Jacob w^th^ Sabine Staismore, . . . & divers others well informed Saints haveing appointed a Day to Seek y^e^ Face of y^e^ Lord in fasting & Prayer, wherein that particular of their Union, togeather as a Church was mainly comended to y^e^ Lord: in y^e^ ending of y^e^ Day they ware United, Thus, Those who minded this present Union & so joyning togeather joyned both hands each w^th^ other Brother and stood in a Ringwise: their intent being declared, H Jacob and each of the Rest made some confession or Profession of their Faith & Repentance, some ware longer some ware briefer, Then they Covenanted togeather to walk in all Gods Ways as he had revealed or should make known to them

Thus the method of using the covenant in each of these earliest churches was different, and the covenant form generally was very simple. Indeed, simplicity was characteristic of most Independent covenants until 1633, when a counter movement possibly was initiated by the long written covenants, signed by the church in Rotterdam under the leadership of Hugh Peter.

After 1640, generally speaking, when the Puritan discussion concerning the church covenant had begun, there seem to have been among dissenters three admitted grades of church covenants, namely, long and short explicit, and implicit covenants, though a short explicit covenant may have been regarded as implicit by some churches.

How in general were explicit covenants used after 1640?

In England, until 1800 at least, they appear always to have been written, and generally subscribed after having been read aloud by some one appointed. In America, until about 1800, Congregational covenants, for the most part at least, were written, but evidently were not usually subscribed. In place of subscription, when the covenant had been read aloud to those seeking membership in the churches, oral assent was required of the candidates who previously had made an extended confession of sin and faith. Baptists in New England before 1800 on the other hand seem generally to have subscribed their covenants when explicit, rather than to have given mere oral assent.

The method of using the church covenant among the early American Congregationalists is indicated in their denial: "*That we make a vocall Church Oath or Covenant, the essentiall forme of a Church, when as wee frequently acknowledge that this Covenant which constituteth a Church, is either implicite or explicite*";[1] and in the statement of the English Puritans that "*there would not be such long narrations, of every one severally*

[1] "A | Defence | of the | Answer made unto the Nine *Questions* or *Positions*," etc., 1645, Preface, p. 13.

as now are used, when men do enter into Church-Covenant, when each one makes a good long speech, in the profession of his Faith and Repentance." [1]

A clear description [2] of the manner in which early Congregational covenants were used in New England is given in a book entitled "A Brief | Narration | of the Practices | of the | Churches in *New-England*, in | their solemne Worship of God. London; 1647." It reads as follows:[3]

After this [*i. e.*, individual "confession of faith" and "declaration of . . . effectual calling"], they enter into a sacred and solemne Covenant, engagement, profession (call it what you please) whereby they protest and promise (by the help of Christ) to walk together as becomes a Church of God, in all duties of holinesse before the Lord, and in all brotherly love and faithfulnesse to each other, according unto God, withall producing their Covenant, agreed on before amonst themselves, then read it before the Assembly, and then either subscribe [4]

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[1] "An Apologie | of the Churches | in New-England | for Church-Covenant, | " etc., London, 1643, p. 29.

[2] Quoted from "*Cottons* Way in *New-England*." [3] P. 2.

[4] This quotation shows that subscription was sometimes practised among the early American Congregationalists, but it cannot have been general, as is shown by the following citation from a work by "Thomas Lechford of Clements Inne" entitled "PLAIN DEALING | OR, | NEVVES FROM | New-England," London, 1642:

"This done [*i. e.*, the church having expressed willingness to receive the candidate, who had finished his 'confession, and profession of his faith'], sometime they proceede to admit more members, all after the same manner, for the most part, two, three, foure, or five, or more together, as they have time, spending sometimes almost a whole afternoone therein. And then the Elder calleth all them, that are to be admitted, by name, and rehearseth the covenant, on their parts, to them, which they publiquely say, they doe promise, by the helpe of God, to performe: And then the Elder, in the name of the Church, promiseth the Churches part of the covenant, to the new admitted members. So they are received, or admitted" (p. 11).

This statement is confirmed by the following note in J. Hammond Trumbull's edition of "Plain Dealing," published in Boston, 1867:

"Mr. Welde (Answer to W. R., 24) writes: 'He [Rathband] tells us, *We hold our Church Covenant must be vocall.*' . . . It's contrary (wee are sure) to our constant practise, that admits members into the Church by a Covenant agreed to by *their*

their hands to it, or testifie by word of mouth their agreement thereto.

The covenant documents of this early period drawn up by English churches were sometimes, perhaps generally, first written on a loose sheet of paper, from which they could conveniently be read. The Woodbridge covenant, however, according to Josiah Thompson, was "drawn up in a parchment Roll," which possibly may have been suggested by the Scotch custom. The Bassingtown covenant, according to the curious account, "was read and subscribed by all the members standing." It will be remembered that when "it was Unanimously agreed [by the remaining members of the Congregational church in Great Gransden] to form themselves into a Strict Baptist Church, Sept^{r} 5th 1733 the Church Met . . . & all the Members Subscribed . . . the old Covenant to which had been added a Clause declaring that for the future none Should be admitted without Signing the Articles & agreeing to Baptism by Immersion." After the text of the covenants, given respectively in the records of the Baptist church at Hail Weston, of the church in Kimbolton, and of the church at Bassington, there was, it will be remembered, what may be called a "Form of Admission," or adaptation of the text of the covenant for convenience in use. In these "Forms of Admission" one accepted the covenant by "lifting up" the "Right hand to the Lord," not by subscription. In other words, the covenant was probably subscribed only by the founders of

silence only: and as it is contrary to our practise, so to our writing, in the *Discourse of the Covenant,* which expressly saith, *that silent consent is sufficient"* (p. 29, note 23).

the church. All other members entered by the "Form of Admission."

Where the term "renew a church covenant" first arose is not absolutely certain. It is probably an idea suggested by the Old Testament. The Scotch often renewed their covenants, so in the past have Congregationalists and Baptists. We have various interesting accounts of the renewal of early Congregational church covenants. Sometimes the phraseology of an old covenant would be altered, generally by additions or by improvement in the expression. Sometimes, however, a covenant would be renewed just as it stood, because the church-members felt they had not performed what they had promised. Of renewals of this last kind there are two accounts in connection with the Norwich church, of the dates December 28, 1669, and October 13, 1675, given by Joseph Rix, F. L. S., as follows :[1]

And in the Conclusion of the fast day [Dec. 28, 1669] it was moued by some brethren and so propounded by the Pastor to the Church to renue their Couenant which was asented vnto by the whole brethren present (except br. Kinge & br. Will Hardy who did both declare their desentt), notwithstanding the Church did proceed in the worke And the Pastor haueing mentioned the sume of the Couenant in shortt it was asented vnto by the whole by the signs of Lifting vp their hand except the two brethren before mentioned.

And towards the Close of y^e^ day [Oct. 13, 1675] (as it was formerly Concluded) the Church did renue their Couenant after this manner. the Couenant was read out of this booke Contayning seuerall Articells being the same Couenant and Articells of Agreement that was entred into at y^e^ first sitting down of this

[1] "Some Account of the Nonconformist Churches at Hail Weston & St Neots," etc., pp. 51, 52, and 54, 55.

Church in y^e^ yeare of our Lord 1644. And after the reading therof the whole Church (then present) both brethren and sisters did (as a sign of their mutuall Consent) Lift vp their right hand and so the meeting was Concluded with prayer and thanks giuing vnto the Lord.

The above citations regarding the customs of particular churches, concern indeed only the covenants of churches in England, but there is no reason to doubt that in general American Congregational and Baptist covenants of the same period were drawn up, subscribed, or assented to and renewed in the same way.

In a book or pamphlet, entitled "A | Gospel-Church: | or, | God's Holy Temple | Opened," published in London in 1675, Stephen Ford gives a very clear statement concerning the way in which churches should engage in covenant. He says:[1]

3. When this [gathering together & asking God for wisdom] is done, and their hearts are warmed with the presence of God, and their minds enlightened with the Spirits Beams of Light, shining in upon them, in answer to their Prayers; and their hearts thereby faster knit to each other in Love, as to the living Members of Christ; then they should declare to each other their free, full and cordial acceptance of, and satisfaction in one another; expresse to one another their real, hearty and joynt Resolutions, purposes and Intentions (by the help of God) to live and walk together as a Church of Christ, in the celebration of all the ordinances of Christ in the Church: and engage, covenant and promise to take upon themselves the practice and observation of all the Laws of Christ, and Duties one to another in that state and Relation; *taking hold of the Covenant* of Grace, accepting the Lord Jesus for their Lord, Head and Saviour, resigning up themselves unto him, and professing their unfained subjection to him and all his Rules.

[1] P. 73.

A most interesting description of the manner in which Half-Way covenants were employed is given in a letter of Rev. Samuel Danforth, pastor of a church in Taunton, Massachusetts, of the date 1705. The letter reads in part :[1]

It was a most comfortable Day the *first* of *March*, when we renew'd the *Reformation Covenant*. . . we added an Engagement to reform *Idleness*, unnecessary *frequenting Houses of public Entertainment, irreverent Behaviour* in *Public Worship, Neglect of Family-Prayer, Promise-breaking*, and *walking with Slanderers* and *Reproachers of others;* and that we should all in our Families be subject to good Orders and Government. It was read to the *Brethren* and *Sisters* in the *Forenoon;* they *standing up* as an outward Sign of their inward Consent, to the *rest* of the *Inhabitants*. In the *Afternoon they* standing up also when it was read ; and then every one that stood up, brought his *Name* ready *writ in a Paper*, and put into the Box, that it might be put on Church Record. . . We gave Liberty to all Men and Women Kind, *from sixteen Years old and upwards* to act with us ; and had *three hundred Names* given in *to list under Christ*, against the Sins of the Times. . . We have *a hundred more* that will yet bind themselves in the *Covenant*, that were then *detained* from Meeting. Let GOD have the Glory.

Yesterday fourteen were *propounded* to the *Church;* some for *full Communion;* others for *Baptism*, being adult Persons.

We may now pass on to a consideration of the manner in which the church covenant has been used during the nineteenth century. In England we have already noticed that during the eighteenth century the covenant idea fell into disfavor, and that neither Congregational nor Baptist churches to-day make much, or perhaps any use of it. In the United States, however, the covenant is generally used by the Congregationalists

[1] Cited by Dr. H. M. Dexter in "Congregationalism," pp. 486, 487.

and also by the Northern Baptists, though by the latter it is probably more generally employed in New England than elsewhere.

In answering the inquiry as to the manner in which the covenant is now employed we may omit any reference to the practice of the few English Congregational and Baptist churches which still possibly make use of the covenant idea. As to the way in which the church covenant is employed in America it may be said that the custom of subscription went out of general use in Baptist churches probably a century ago. In modern American Congregational churches the covenant is assented to, and sometimes at least subscribed by those entering the membership of the church, but often evidently it is used for no other purpose. In many Baptist churches the covenant is renewed at certain times, on which occasions the pastor usually reads it to the members of his church, and occasionally requests oral assent. Possibly, however, there may be Baptist churches which have used a covenant in the earlier years of their history, but which now employ it seldom or never, for during the last century printed covenants of several types have been adopted by our churches for the most part, and with their use the value of the church covenant has greatly deteriorated. Indeed the covenant idea has ceased almost entirely to have for us the great significance it had for the early New England colonists. As they used it the church covenant idea gave a certain rugged religious character to the State, equaled only in Scotland; with us it has lost its hold in the churches, and has little or no influence on the life outside of the churches. The future of the church covenant no one

with certainty can forecast, but its history during the last four centuries illustrates its value as well as its defects. The principle underlying it is one of the most interesting and characteristic held not only by the founders of New England, but also by the early Scotch Reformers, and by the Anabaptist and Independent leaders, both on the Continent and in Great Britain.

APPENDIX A

HAMMERSMITH (ENGLAND) COVENANT

THE Covenant of the Baptist Church at Hammersmith, evidently employed at its organization November 10, 1793, and printed apparently for the use of the church in 1838, is an extended document and reads as follows:[1]

WE who desire to walk together in the fear of the Lord, do, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, desire most sincerely to profess our deep and serious humiliation for our iniquities, transgressions, and sins, whereby we have justly offended the great and Holy God, and provoked him to pour forth his wrath and indignation upon us; we do therefore humbly implore the free and full forgiveness of all our sins, through the blood of his dear Son and our only Saviour Christ Jesus: the justification of our persons through his righteousness: and the thorough renovation and sanctification of our whole bodies, souls, and spirits, that we may be to him a peculiar people, zealous of good works: and finally, through his grace, obtain an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away.

In order whereunto, we do in the presence of the great and Holy God, the Searcher of all hearts, in a deep sense of our own unworthiness, with one consent, solemnly and sincerely give up ourselves first to the Lord, and then to each other by the will of God: that he may be our God and that we may be his people, ac-

[1] A copy is in the Angus Collection. It is entitled, "The Covenant of the Baptist Church, meeting at Hammersmith. Formed Nov. 10, 1793. Hammersmith, 1838." Sm. 8vo, p. 8, 8. Press Mark 3. d. 21. (c.)

cording to the everlasting covenant of his free grace, in which alone we hope to be accepted through his blessed Son Christ Jesus: whom we take to be our Prophet to teach us, our High Priest to atone for and justify us, and our Lawgiver and King to reign over us.

And we do heartily resolve, in humble dependance upon the spirit of his grace, to conform to all his holy laws and ordinances, for the growth, establishment, and consolation of our souls in Christ Jesus: that we may be a holy people unto him, that we may unfeignedly serve him in our generation, and that we may gladly wait for his second appearance as our glorious Bridegroom.

Being fully convinced that a company of Baptized Believers, who, by the grace and power of Christ in their hearts, under a conviction of their duty, unite themselves together in a holy band, giving themselves up first to the Lord, and then to each other, that they may walk together as saints, in love, peace, and constant practice and celebration of all the laws and worship of Christ, to his glory, and their own spiritual profit, is a Gospel Church agreeable to divine institution.

We do therefore, (in the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Saints, who is the only Sovereign Lord and Lawgiver to his Church,) by this covenant, testify and declare our subjection to him as such; and solemnly join ourselves in a holy union and fellowship; professing in his strength humbly to submit to all the discipline of his blessed Gospel, and heartily to fulfill all the duties therein required of a people who are united together in such a spiritual relation.

As, FIRST OF ALL, to walk in all holiness, godliness, and brotherly love, that our communion with each other may be well-pleasing to God, comfortable and edifying to ourselves, lovely to the Lord's people, and convincing to the world.

SECONDLY—To watch over each other's walk and conversation, to provoke one another to love and good works; not to suffer sin upon one another, but to warn,

rebuke, and admonish each other with all meekness, according to the rules and example of our blessed Saviour.

THIRDLY—To bear with each other's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities, and that with much tenderness, not discovering them to any without the Church, or to any within, unless it be done for mutual edification, according to Christ's rule and authority.

FOURTHLY—To bear one another's burdens, to cleave one to another, and to have a fellow feeling for each other in all conditions, whether outward or inward, which God in his wise providence shall be pleased to bring any of us into.

FIFTHLY—In an especial manner to pray one for another, for the glory and increase of this Church, for the presence of God in it, for the pouring forth of his Spirit upon it, and for his protection of it to his glory.

SIXTHLY—As much as in us lieth to live peaceably with all men, and amongst ourselves to follow after the things that make for peace, by carefully avoiding all occasions of division ; to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, by receiving into our affection and communion those whom we believe our gracious God hath received into his love and favour.

SEVENTHLY—To meet together on Lord's Days, and at all other such times, seasons, and places, as the Lord shall give us opportunity ; that we may serve and glorify him in the ways of his own appointed worship, and thereby be instrumental in edifying and building up one another upon our most holy faith.

EIGHTHLY—Always to endeavour, to the utmost of our capacity, to promote, encourage, and maintain a holy, faithful, regular, and gifted Ministry, to take the charge of us, to go in and out before us as the shepherd before his flock ; together with all such officers as are by Christ appointed for the maintaining holy order and discipline in his Church.

These and all other Gospel duties we humbly submit unto, professing and purposing to perform them, not in

our own strength, (being conscious of our weakness,) but in the power and strength of our ever blessed God, through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, whose we humbly hope we are, and whom we desire for ever to serve. AMEN.

APPENDIX B

BISHOP'S STORTFORD COVENANT

IN the Angus collection at Regent's Park College, London, there is a printed copy of "The Covenant of the Baptized Church of Christ, at Bishop's Stortford, Holding Strict Communion," dated "Feb. 26th, 1837," and signed by a member. The document covers four printed pages, and was to be "signed by the whole church, and by every member at the time of admission, when this covenant is also read and presented." The covenant reads as follows:

I.—We do sincerely and without reserve surrender ourselves unto our Lord Jesus Christ, and to one another, to walk together in Church fellowship, according to his word, promising with a dependence on his grace alone to hold and maintain a holy fellowship, endeavouring to watch over and edify one another in love.

II.—We acknowledge the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, and solemnly engage to make them the rule of our faith and practice. ii. Tim. 3. 15. 16. 17.

III.—The leading principles of this sacred volume as they appear to us, and the belief of which by signing our names hereto we do solemnly avow are as follow:

1. Three divine and equal Persons in the Godhead. Matt. xxviii. 19, i. John, v. 7.

2. Original Sin and the consequent entire depravity of Human Nature. Rom. v. 12.—21.

3. Eternal and Personal Election to holiness and happiness. Eph. i. 3.—12.

4. Particular Redemption through the sufferings and death of Christ. John x. 15. Rom. 11. 7.

5. Efficacious Grace in Regeneration. John iii. 5. Eph. i. 19.

6. The complete Justification our Persons by the Righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith. Rom. iii. 21. 22. Gal. ii. 16. Heb. x. 12.—14.

7. Sanctification of the heart by the operations of the Holy Ghost. I Cor. vi. 11. 2 Thes. ii. 13. 1 Peter i. 2.

8. The final perseverance of all true believers in faith and holiness. Phil. i. 6. John x. 28. 29.

9. The Resurrection of the dead. 1 Thes. 4. 16. 17. 18.

10. The Future Judgment. Matt. xxv. 31.—46.

11. The Eternal Happiness of the Righteous. John xvii. 24. Mat. 7. 21.

12. The Everlasting misery of all who die impenitent. 1 Cor. vi. 9. 10. Rev. xxi. 8. 27. Matt. xxv. 46.

13. Baptism by immersion in water, on a profession of repentance and faith, and the supper of the Lord to be positive ordinances of the Gospel. Matt. xxviii. 19. John iii. 23. Rom. vi. 4. Acts viii. 12. 36. 39. 1 Cor. xi 23–26.

14. The summary of our duty to our God—to ourselves —and to one another we believe to be contained in the Moral Law, which we hold to be the rule of life to believers as well as to others. 1 Tim. i. 8. Rom. vii. 22. Rom. iii. 31.

IV.—We solemnly bind ourselves to endeavour to attend the public worship of God with our Brethren as constantly as possible, or if necessarily prevented sometimes, yet to make a point of attending on the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Heb. x. 25.

V.—We consider it our duty to read the Scriptures and to pray with and for our families.—To be peaceable and obedient subjects of the civil government of our Country, in all things consistent with our duty to God.—To be sober and temperate in our deportment.—Just and upright in our dealings.—And studious to promote

peace and good will amongst all men.—As masters, to be kind and just.—As servants, faithful.—As husbands, affectionate.—As wives, obedient.—As parents, to endeavour to train up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.—And as children, to reverence our parents. Titus ii. 11. 12. Eph. iv. Col. iii. 18–23.

VI.—We solemnly bind ourselves to behave affectionately towards our Pastor—To pray for him—and willingly to contribute to his support—and to obey him in all things wherein he warns, counsels, and exhorts us according to the word of God. 2 Thess. iii. 1.

VII.—With respect to our fellow members that we cherish a modest, kind, sympathizing, free, open, faithful, forgiving behaviour.—that we will neither suffer sin to rest on their heads, nor needlessly expose their failings, but will tell them of them and be willing to be told of ours in return. 1 Thess. v. 11.—15. Phil. ii. 1. 5. Col. iii. 12.

VIII.—We solemnly promise to pray for one another and in every possible way strive to promote each others welfare. Gal. vi. 9. 10.

IX.—In all matters of Judgment in the Church, we solemnly bind ourselves to be faithful to our consciences, yet never to indulge a contentious spirit.—We will aim to act in harmony with our brethren as much as possible, and if in any instance we cannot agree with them, we will remember that others have judgment as well as us, and if we be the lesser number, we will peaceably submit to the greater.

X.—We do solemnly promise that we will not expose, but keep secret the differences or any of the transactions of the Church, which it is prudent to conceal from those who are not of its communion.

Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, and our Saviour, be Glory,—Majesty,—Dominion—and Power, both now and for ever, Amen.

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